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Farmer, Bernard J.

Nelson Novels

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN



This honest, unassuming story bears upon every page the mark of truth. Peter Cochrane, the typical, average decent young Briton, goes out to Canada to try his luck. His adventures begin on board ship—not the spectacular adventures of fiction, but the smaller, no less vivid adventures of everyday life. Arrived at his destination, and having shaken off his undesirable companion, he sets out to find work. The novel is the story of his fortunes and of his love. He has a hard time, and a varied experience of life and humanity, before he settles down at last, happily married, to a steady life in the country of his adoption.

Go West, Young Man is an impressive and gripping book. Mr. Farmer speaks for a great mass of people whose problems seldom find expression—those whose lives are a steady struggle with unemployment and want. Yet in spite of this, his book is light-hearted, full of courage and enjoyment of the excitements and pleasures of everyday life.

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN

by

BERNARD J. FARMER

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CHAPTER I

THE *Carolina* was not a large ship or a new ship, but she had the confidence of the seasoned traveller who has crossed the Atlantic scores of times, and as she climbed up to her maximum speed of sixteen knots and the rails began to tremble with the vibration, she seemed to know that she would get to Quebec—in her own time—in spite of storms and other hazards. Ships have personalities even as human beings : staid, reckless, lucky or unlucky ; and the *Carolina* would surely have considered a wreck an outrage of the most disgraceful kind.

Surveying his fellow-passengers as they milled from one side of the deck to the other to gaze at passing craft, Peter Cochrane privately considered that he had never seen such a crowd. He wished he had spent more and travelled First, or even Tourist Third. Most of them seemed to be foreigners from Central Europe, and some could not have washed since the day they were born. One old fellow sitting on a hatch near Peter was wearing a fur cap and a heavy coat trimmed with some kind

of fur like a mangy cat's. He eyed the scene calmly with expressionless black eyes. Peter glanced at him with distaste. What a fellow-passenger ! The old man caught his eye and said something to him, clawing at his coat and pointing to the sea. Peter turned away without replying.

He went below to find his cabin, fully determined that if he had people like that for sleeping companions he would change at any cost. But it was not as bad as that. His companions, two of them, in a four-berth cabin, were English-speaking : a returning Canadian who introduced himself as Walters, and a stout commercial traveller with wide padded shoulders, who said his name was Blenkinsom and that he was pleased to meet Peter. Peter shook hands with reserve.

The Canadian he liked. Walters brought out a bottle of whisky from his bag, mixed Peter a mild drink in a tooth-glass, and gave it to him.

"Put that down," he said ; "it'll make you feel better. I guess you're kind of home-sick. I'm travelling Third on this tub because I spent every nickel I had in London. If I'd stayed longer they would have had my pants. But I had a swell time."

Peter laughed. The whisky went to his head slightly because he was not used to it, but it certainly made him feel better.

"Let's take a look on deck," said Walters.

They went through alleyways choked with hurrying stewards and stewardesses, baggage, and passengers, to the companionway which led to the

shelter deck, a rather dark covered-in space lined with wooden seats. It had a peculiar, unpleasant smell about it. They were out in the Channel now, and the ship had commenced to pitch. Peter felt the deck heaving under his feet. . . . Walters pointed.

"Look at old John Polakski."

The old man, wrapped tightly in his fur coat, was leaning over the rail, the picture of misery. He was joined by another and another. Two disdained the formality of the rail, and Peter thought he would hate to be a steward. . . . "Well," he said suddenly, "I think I'll go below."

"Sure," said Walters. His grey eyes held a gleam of laughter. He went up to the Polak. "Well, John, feel better?"

The old man moaned something.

Walters turned. "Steward—hey, steward! Bring me a cup of Bovril."

Then, when it came, he handed it to the old man. "That'll fix you up, John."

The old man took it gratefully.

Meanwhile Peter had gone below, with increasing speed, to the lavatories, and after a prolonged session there he came back pale but feeling better. He avoided the shelter deck.

Impressed by Walters with the necessity of eating, he staggered below to dinner, which was at six o'clock. The dining saloon, a long, low, white-painted room, with necessary girders artistically picked out in blue, was crowded with passengers

being sorted into tables by the chief steward, with the aid of an interpreter. Peter found himself at a table for six, with Walters, the commercial traveller, an elderly Englishman with one arm returning to a farm in the West, and two ladies, no relation to one another apparently—one quite old, and the other a girl, her eyes reddened from weeping.

The commercial traveller was quite at home and talked a great deal, showing gold-filled teeth when he laughed. He talked to Walters and Peter in turn, mostly about selling insurance. The elderly Englishman said nothing. The old lady made polite remarks to the girl, who, after a first glance round, kept her eyes on her plate. Peter felt sorry for her.

He was thoroughly disgusted with the voyage already. The food was good and there was plenty of it, but at the next table were foreigners, including old John Polakski, as the Canadian called him, and their manners were non-existent. When they wanted anything they grabbed for it. They ate like animals, using their fingers mostly. One great black-bearded fellow Peter noticed particularly : his appetite was enormous ; he seemed capable of eating his own weight in food. Once he pushed his plate off the table, and going down on his hands and knees collected the mess of meat and potatoes hastily, as if he feared that some one would rob him, then continued his meal at ravenous speed. Finding Peter's eye on him, he stared back, still munching, his black eyes expressionless as shoe buttons.

"They're not so bad when you get used to them," said Walters.

The ship rolled heavily. There was a violent eructation and a girl staggered across the room.

"Hold it, lady!" cried the commercial traveller.

Peter rose abruptly from the table. "Excuse me," he said. He walked steadily out of the dining saloon and managed to reach the lavatory in time. For an hour he stayed there, sitting with his head in his hands. For all he cared, the ship could go down.

Later that evening they put into Cherbourg and gained temporary respite, but the motion started again as soon as they were back in the Channel. The engines throbbed. In the cabin the washstand jarred . . . and jarred again. Peter undressed, with many horrible pauses while the ship sank beneath his feet then lurched up sickeningly, and tumbled into his bunk, utterly and abysmally miserable.

The next day he felt better. He had slept well. Lying down, he found, one is not so prone to be sick, and though the motion was as bad he had got more used to it.

Many of the passengers, particularly the foreigners, some of whom could not have seen the sea before in their lives, were prostrate. They lay on top of the hatches covered with rugs, and a whole miserable crowd were huddled together on the shelter deck. Peter stayed on the top deck, where the clean salt air blew invigoratingly, and found he was better there. He hired a deck-chair from the steward and,

wrapped in a rug, sat with Walters next to the girl and the old lady, who slept most of the time.

The girl recovered quickly, and that evening she walked round the deck with Peter. Her name, she told him, was Doris Mather, and she was going to Toronto to take up a post as governess to a Canadian family. She had changed considerably since the first evening at dinner. Her eyes were no longer red ; she was pretty in a sensuous way, with full lips and a softly rounded figure, which was accentuated by a close-fitting dress. She spoke to the stewards in a sharp, over-authoritative manner, but her eyes followed them. . . . From their knowledge of human nature they nicknamed her "S.A."—being short for "Sex Appeal."

"He's funny," she said of Walters, as they passed him on their way round the deck and she met his quizzical gaze.

"I like him," said Peter.

He tried to give the conversation an intellectual turn, as befitted a future governess ; but books, she said, bored her, and children were all right when they were good. He could not help wondering why she was going out to Canada at all : she seemed so totally unfitted for any but the most softly padded existence, and was certainly unlike the usual conception of a governess.

As to his own affairs, she was easily satisfied by a brief explanation of a job. Why else, indeed, should a man travel Third ? But she glanced at him repeatedly : at his young good-looking features,

clear eyes, and fresh complexion—he might have come out of a very cold bath—and thought him little more than a boy, though he was nearly twenty-three. He made a remark to her and smiled—a wide, attractive smile which lit up a serious face. She smiled back. She strove to hold his gaze, but he looked away after a moment, showing no more than courteous interest. Her gaze still lingered. Good clothes gave him an air of well-being, in contrast to the rest of the Third Class. She made efforts to annex him for herself entirely. Walters she took a dislike to, and would hardly speak to him. When she met them together she hastened to get Peter away, and he was too polite to refuse. But she could not walk for long, and returned to her chair. Then her rug bothered her until Peter put it straight, and she could only read for a few minutes before chattering again.

"I'd lay off that Jane," said Walters bluntly to Peter later.

"What do you mean?"

"Keep away from her. She won't do you any good."

"I'm sorry for her," said Peter. "She's alone and going out to a strange country. . . ."

"Well—I've told you." And feeling Peter likely to resent further interference, Walters changed the subject. "Come and talk to old John."

They found the Polak on the shelter deck, philosophically smoking his pipe.

"Feeling better, John?" said Walters cheerily.

The old man bowed ; he bowed, too, to Peter.
“ In my country a ship she stay still, eh ? ” he said.

“ Going far, John ? ”

“ To Calgary.”

“ That’s sure some way.”

The old man puffed. “ I have one son, two grandchild. They will be glad to see me, yes.” He fumbled laboriously through several coats, and at length produced a snapshot which he held up proudly. They strained their eyes.

“ A fine looking fellow,” said Walters of the young farmer, holding up two children.

Peter agreed.

“ A fine feller, yes. He very good to his old father. He pay my passage.”

“ There’s loyalty for you,” said Walters as they walked away.

Again Peter agreed. He felt rather ashamed of the way he had first treated the old man. Dirt did not seem so important now.

Every morning they went to the shelter deck, where he had ensconced himself, to visit John Polakski—what his real name was Peter never knew ; and Peter even found himself talking to some smiling Slav women with shawls over their heads whom he would have avoided disdainfully a week ago ; and giving sweets, bought at the ship’s bazaar, to the children.

Though the sea grew rougher and the wind rose steadily to a howling gale on the Friday night, he was not ill again ; and he began to feel tremendously

well and ate, four times a day, with prodigious appetite. He was, indeed, remarkable. His blue eyes shone, his pink English cheeks radiated health. He carried health like a banner. Walters jokingly told him how fit he looked.

"I feel it." Peter inflated his chest with sea air. He gazed at the heaving, white-capped waves, illimitable as far as the eye could see. "Isn't it glorious?"

"I hope Canada doesn't spoil you," said Walters abruptly.

Peter asked many questions, to which Walters gave grave, informative replies. Quietness was his standpoint to life; and at thirty odd he found it a never-ending entertainment compounded of humour and tragedy. He liked Peter, but he liked still more the class he represented: that of an educated Englishman. Peter told him something of his past, and Walters guessed more. Their conversations were interrupted frequently by Doris. Peter could not pretend that he liked Doris very much; she was too self-centred, too different from the girls he had been accustomed to; but the helpless way she attempted to do anything for herself roused the chivalry in him, and impulsively one evening, when she complained of being home-sick, he offered to accompany her as far as Montreal.

"That'll make things easier for you," he said.

She gave a little sigh and laid her hand on his arm. After a moment they moved away and they continued round the deck. He regretted his offer

almost at once, but he could not draw back. He did not mention it to Walters.

The night before they landed at Quebec they had a concert. Several people in evening dress came down from the First Class, with an air of seeing the bears perform. This infuriated Peter. So far had he identified himself with the Third Class that he objected strongly to being patronized, and said so.

"Well, don't get sore," said Walters. "That dame in the fur cloak is looking at you."

Peter barely glanced, but could not escape a feeling of pride that he had been singled out from the mob.

"Darn funny taste she's got," continued Walters lazily.

Peter grinned. He was familiar by now with Walters' brand of humour. "She must be looking at you," he retorted.

The chairman took his seat, and the concert began. The commercial traveller told funny stories—and they were good ones. Peter laughed with the rest, until a bored voice from behind said : "Shall we stick it out ?" Two Ukrainians got up and sang, to an harmonica accompaniment. A fat steward sang love songs. . . . So it went on, to a furious slatting of canvas from a weather dodger and the throb of the engines. Half-way through the chairman made an appeal for the Distressed British Seamen's Fund. "There is sorrow on the sea," he ended simply.

The foreigners—Central Europeans, Germans, and

French—gave generously. At the end the chairman announced the total, and all cheered wildly, old John banging on the floor with his heavy stick.

"They're not so bad after all," thought Peter. He stood up to sing the National Anthem, then as he turned to go out he caught the eye of the girl in the fur cloak—a dark-haired, dark-eyed beauty who seemed bored with her escort. She gazed at him with slumberous interest. Peter challenged attention by reason of his magnificent health. As they converged towards the door she spoke :

"Would you care to come up to the First Class for a little amusement?"

"No, thanks," he said shortly.

She lifted her chin and turned away.

Walters, who was behind Peter, remarked, "Well, well."

Peter flushed. He was annoyed. Confounded cheek, he thought, inviting him up to the First Class. He preferred the Third. The sight of old John enthusiastically stamping still lingered with him. He was a fine fellow. A rather noisome old woman pursuing her slow way was full of kindness and good feeling. So were all the Third Class. Peter was, in fact, an idealist.

He said something of what he felt to Walters.

"Yes. Quite so," was the reply. "Let's go for a turn on deck."

They leant over the stern rail, watching the wash of the propeller. The night was clear, the whole heavens a magnificent complication of stars, with

a full moon, low down on the horizon, flooding dark waters which heaved gently, hiding in mystery and silence a life of their own. Behind was England, nearly three thousand miles away. Peter thought dreamily of the past, of the worries and uncertainties, dwindled down to nothing now. Before him was Canada, a new land, a new life. This was the last time, probably, that he would think of England.

CHAPTER II

I

PETER was born at Aylesford, in Kent, a small village on the Medway a few miles away from Rochester. His father and mother had died within a month of each other when he was twenty. His father he remembered as a big bluff man with a beard, manager of a mill at Snodland, on the banks of the river, the mud being peculiarly valuable for making cement. The mill was a vast place full of rumbling machinery. On Sunday mornings, after church, he would take Peter round. Peter liked the engine-house the best ; and tightly respectable in Eton trousers and jacket and gleaming white collar, he would stand and gaze at the enormous flywheel turning, flickering light on the walls, while his father spoke to the foreman.

"I'll make you a real engineer some day," his father would say, and Peter thought that meant being manager of a mill, with power to stop and start the flywheel. . . .

His mother was one of a great and declining Kentish family who had lived in Aylesford for generations. The struggle between master and

man, which was to culminate in the supremacy of the Trade Unions, was only beginning then ; and if the working classes had feelings, the Chedwittens were not aware of it. They lived sublimely aloof, as God had ordained they should, in the great stone house below Aylesford Bridge. One day a governess cart with the governess and three young ladies in it ran away, and a young man, son of a local farmer, stood sturdily in its path. The agitated governess thanked him profusely, and the incident ended. But the next Sunday, John Cochrane, the young man, caught the eye of the youngest girl, Alice, as they were coming out of church. He promptly looked away. The girl blushed and looked down. But the vital spark was struck. Another fortuitous meeting led to romantic secret meetings, for the Cochranes' farm adjoined the Chedwitten lands. They fell in love—and this in a day when filial respect was everything, and a farmer, however estimable, not worthy of notice by a family with a crest and motto, *Dei Gratia* ;—and at twenty-two she ran away to London and married him. She never regretted it. John Cochrane was strong and sturdy and reliable, a suitable mate for the highly strung, fine-drawn nature of his wife. When the mill was started at Snodland he entered it at once ; and rose steadily, aided by a dogged persistence that would leave a brilliant but more erratic man behind. At first ignored completely by the family, as having stolen from them something which must henceforth be forgotten, as if dead, he was grudgingly acknow-

ledged when Peter was born and Alice's mother rebelled against the stern attitude of her husband ; and finally John Cochrane was respected. The years of the War hit the Chedwittens hard. Their mother died in the first year. The only son was killed in battle. First their magnificent trees went, then bit by bit their land, then, when William Chedwitten, the father, died, the great stone house to pay the savage assessment of death duties. John Cochrane took their affairs in his hands. The money remaining was invested, and the four spinster sisters lived quietly together in Rochester.

To Peter they were Aunts Faith, Hope, Mary, and Janet, who dressed in shiny black and rustled when they moved. They never failed to remind him of the ancient glory of the Chedwittens. It was only when Peter went to a public school and met with the snobbishness of well-connected boys that he appreciated the greatness of the Chedwittens and his relationship to them.

From his mother Peter inherited a fine sensitiveness. He still had her water-colours of the river at Aylesford, of the beautiful old bridge. There was something reminiscent of the age in the fine penmanship, "July," —a careful comma—then, "1882, Alice Chedwitten."

He learned from her to love Kent : the beauty of the lanes in spring, the banks lavishly decked with primroses and violets ; the sweet heady scent of the may ; the field after field of blossoming fruit trees, all pink and white, like a host of decorated sunshades.

Being an only child, he was sometimes lonely ; and he had a lonely child's love of roaming. In the holiday from schools he would tramp for miles round Maidstone, Boxley, and Hollingbourne, or up on the chalk hills beyond Detling to Bredhurst and Sittingbourne. He knew the river as an intimate friend ; and many an afternoon he would row up past Maidstone to Farleigh Lock, surely one of the loveliest scenes in all a lovely county, have tea at the bridge, then drift back contentedly, his soul sated with beauty, under the shade of the great trees. He liked the hop-picking time, too ; every year he spent a fortnight in the fields with a friend from Tonbridge, and while they acted as tallymen, or picked in a desultory way, as befitted the son of the owner and his friend, they would listen to the conversation of the Cockneys, their accent so broad that "God" would rhyme with "sword."

Peter had his first love affair in the hop-fields. The daughter of a neighbouring farmer could not reach to drag down her hop binds. So Peter helped her. Both shy, they barely looked at one another, but he went away with the impression of two dark blue eyes ; and that evening he lingered at the gate to see her. She gave him a quick glance—and something chaotic started inside him, like the starting of an unsuspected machine. He did not speak to her—one does not address an angel without good cause—but drawn irresistibly, he lingered at the gate night and morning for the next three days,

and each time there was a brief interchange of glances. For Peter the world was gloriously, vividly alive. On the fourth day they were introduced quite casually by the farmer's wife, who defined their difference in social station by referring to him as "young Mr. Cochrane." But social stations mattered nothing to Peter where beauty was concerned. He spoke to the girl with beating heart.

"It is a nice day," she agreed.

Her eyes were large, shy, and warm as life itself. He gazed at her, then slowly they walked together across the field.

"I like the name Norah," he said.

"It's my aunt's."

They commenced picking, but Peter found his eyes going continually to her soft brown hair under an old panama hat. Being an idealist, he saw only that which he wished to see, and noticed nothing of the tattered skirt and broken shoes.

She was a goddess.

He spoke to her again at twelve o'clock when they were all gathered round for a picnic lunch; and handing round sandwiches, he paid her twice as much attention as any one else. She raised her eyes in a quick, shy, adoring way that thrilled him. That evening at the gate they touched hands, and both paused. The sound of voices faded as the pickers trooped away to their huts. They were alone with the setting sun and the shadows. The air was still—heavy with the scent of hops.

As a picture it was perfect. The girl was as wild

and natural as a little gipsy. Peter's smooth face was ruddy in the setting sun. His strong brown arms were bare below the sleeves of his khaki shirt. He looked down possessively. His soul was on the topmost heights ; all he had ever read of Tennyson, of the knights of old, was embodied in this moment. She looked up at him. Her hand touched his. He bent suddenly, and his nose struck the brim of her hat.

"Clumsy !" she said. He was abashed ; the moment hovered on the verge of ruin. "Kiss me again," she whispered.

He bent again and her lips found his. He felt them warm, slightly rough, with a curious common quality like that of earth.

Wheels rumbled on the road and a coarse voice shouted, "Norah ! "

They parted quickly.

"It's my father," she said. Her eyes flashed him a glance, now devoid of shyness, and she was gone. Peter walked slowly back to the shed where he had left his bicycle.

The following day he had to return home. When the Christmas holidays came round, he cycled over many times and went past her house in the hope of seeing her ; but he was too shy to call. He met her again by chance in Rochester ; she was with another girl and a loutish-looking boy. He scowled fiercely at the boy, and drew back lest they should see him.

Going home he pictured in his imagination scenes where Norah and the boy were in great danger.

He, Peter, would save them heroically, and leave without giving them a chance to thank him. The boy, a fine fellow under his unprepossessing exterior (else Norah would not have been with him), could have her ; but as she was dragged away for her marriage she would gaze after him, Peter . . .

He enjoyed the subject for at least a week, till his imagination found something else.

When Peter was eighteen he left school and entered the Imperial College of Science, South Kensington, where for three years he was to soak himself in engineering, theory and practice. It was the romance of engineering that appealed to him more than the technical details, and an early brilliance, shown by models constructed at home, faded. At school he had been considered clever, but compared to the most brilliant men of his year at the College he was the veriest dunce. Only a desire to please his father, and a persistence, deeply ingrained in his nature, which would not allow him to give up whatever the obstacle, kept him going. He had to work long hours at night to keep even abreast of the tide of examinations. But by persistent cramming he obtained his Intermediate B.Sc. Degree, and entered on the preparation for the Final. At the end of his second year at the College his father died suddenly, killed by a fall one frosty morning ; and his mother, who had been in delicate health for years, only survived him a few weeks.

Peter was stunned by the shock. He gazed at the

image of his father in the darkened room. He trembled at death . . . at the lonely majesty of the rigid moulded lines under the white sheet. Summoning all his will power, he bent to kiss the cold forehead. His lips shuddered at the touch. He felt awkward and unresponsive ; surely he should cry. . . . But he could not in that room. He knew that his father, despite what his aunts said about the Spirit resting till the third day, was no longer there. To keep the body four days before burial, to know that it was slowly disintegrating, seemed terrible to Peter. Why couldn't a man be buried the moment he died ? But there was "respect" to the dead.

The undertaker was gloomily pleased about the way the corpse "kept" ; the external injuries, indeed, were slight. On the fourth day he told Peter in a whisper that he had better "close down." The three aunts—Aunt Janet, the one whom he liked best, was with his mother, who lay prostrate from the shock—nodded in unison, like three death's heads. Even at that moment Peter wondered what the eldest aunt, a gaunt, hook-nosed creature, would look like in death. . . .

At the graveside Peter experienced his first real sorrow for his father. As the coffin was lowered into the ground he realized that the bluff, bearded man who had taken him round the mill and wanted so passionately for him to be an engineer, was gone, utterly, irrevocably gone. A wave of desolation swept over him. He bit his lips fiercely, but the

tears came. He stood alone, tears coursing down his cheeks. His father had always been kind, had never whipped him as Aunt Faith constantly recommended as being good for children, had tried in an undemonstrative way to secure his affection, had given him the best he could.

This last was too much altogether for Peter. He stood rigid, fighting for self-control. On the way home something queer inside him rebelled at the aunts, and he would not speak a word to them.

His mother's death, coming before he returned to London, he hardly felt, so great was the shock of the first, and he went through the funeral automatically. He grieved for her, of course, but she was less of a real personality to him than his father had been. Soon after his birth her health began to decline ; she knew she would never have another child, and by the time he was ten years old and had started going to school she was a definite invalid, and rarely left the house. An omnivorous reader, she often read half the night. She taught Peter the things that had mattered in her youth : poetry, a love of nature, honour—but always from the standpoint of the past. He never took any of his problems to her. Like his father, he was unfailingly patient and kind towards her, and he never found her other than sweet-tempered. But the flame that had burned so fiercely for John Cochrane died quickly to a tiny, steady glow ; and when he passed, that, too, was extinguished.

When the second funeral was over, and the aunts had departed to their barren house, one room devoted exclusively to each, Peter sat down to face the fact that he was alone in the world : that he had no home, and little money. His education had cost a considerable sum, and when all was sold there would be enough, the lawyer told him, to see him through College, with perhaps a hundred pounds over.

"Old-fashioned heavy furniture won't fetch the price nowadays," said the lawyer conversationally.

"No," agreed Peter baldly.

"We'd better have Deacon for the sale."

Peter nodded. He found his voice. "There are one or two things . . ."

"Of your father's? Surely. Take what you want, and Deacon'll make an inventory of the rest."

Peter took his father's gold watch which had been left where he last placed it, on the dressing-table of his room, and as he felt the heavy case in his pocket he seemed to rescue something of his father's spirit from the empty void—from this blasting to the four winds.

As soon as he could he returned to London, his lodgings which he shared with two other students a relief after the gloomy house. He took up his work again. On Saturday afternoons he played Rugby football for the "B" Fifteen, where he formed a solid if undistinguished member of the scrum. At the end of the year he secured a Pass

Degree, and almost at once, by a lucky chance, dropped into a vacant position at Wickham and Bayling, electrical engineers, of Rochester ; Mr. Wickham, knowing nothing of his father but happening to apply to the College Employment Bureau about that time, thinking that a research worker, provided he could do something practical as well, would enhance the dignity of the firm.

Peter worked there for nine months, steadily and conscientiously, then was discharged on the plea of increasingly bad business. But a position so speedily obtained made him feel that the same thing could happen again.

II

The day following his last with Wickham and Bayling, Peter went up to town to see his late Professor of Electricity, with a view to finding another position. But it seemed that other Bachelors of Science with Pass Degrees, and some even with Honours, were doing exactly the same thing ; and men who held good positions clung to them with discouraging tenacity.

The Professor held out no hope at all.

"The only thing I can see for you," he said, "is a student apprenticeship with one of the big firms till you have served your time—and even that may be difficult to get just now—or you can go abroad. If anything turns up I'll let you know, but I advise you to look round on your own." And

he scraped back his chair as a sign that the interview was over.

Peter went out, considerably depressed. There had been times when three pounds a week, which was what he had received at Wickham and Bayling's, was totally inadequate to supply his needs ; but thirty shillings a week for three years, which was what a student apprenticeship would mean !

The alternative was to go abroad—fortunately he had some fifty pounds in the bank—and with a very vague idea of the relative merits of Canada, Australia, and South Africa from the point of view of the emigrant, he called at the Colonization Department of one of the big Canadian railroads.

First impressions were encouraging. Round the walls were scenes from Canadian life : prosperous farmsteads, ploughing, reaping, threshing ; lighted cases showing the rich tint, like the glowing yellow in a stained-glass window, of the ripe corn ; samples of wheat and barley and oats, copper, asbestos, and gold ; while preserved beneath glass cases were exquisite little statues fashioned in maple sugar.

Peter gazed for some time at one of King George V., then suddenly took the plunge ; and presently found himself closeted with a clean-shaven, bustling type of man, who wore huge horn-rimmed spectacles. He shook hands with Peter, told him to sit down, said, "Fine day, isn't it ?" and at once began to speak of the advantages of farm life in Canada.

Peter interrupted.

"Pardon me, I'm not a farmer ; I'm an engineer. What chance would I have ? "

"Any relatives there ? "

"No."

"Friends ? "

"No."

"Well, Canada needs men on the land—preferably those with some experience and capital—but above all she needs men. The Government-assisted passages apply only to those willing to work on farms, we can guarantee you a place there ; but if you have health and strength, money enough to pay Third Class passage—eighteen pounds—and are willing to work, I should say 'Go !'" He appraised Peter. "You look strong enough. Never saw such a healthy-looking chap in my life."

"I've played games a bit," said Peter modestly. Then he asked, "Do you maintain any employment office where I can apply when I get there ? "

"We have offices in all the principal cities. Suppose you book to Winnipeg, say ; when you arrive you would apply at our department in the station, and we should send them a letter telling them to expect you and giving your qualifications." He drew a sheet of paper towards him. "What are they ? "

Peter told him and he noted them down.

"You might get a job as engineman in a lumber camp to start with. The great thing is to take anything till you find your feet."

Peter nodded. Engineman in a lumber camp had a romantic sound to it ; it conjured up visions of

mighty forests and rushing streams, of men in open shirts and field boots, and himself on the engine, doing a man's work. . . . Far better, he thought, than slaving away in some works.

He got up.

"Thanks. I'll sail by the first available boat then—I've no family ties. And if you would send that letter to Winnipeg, I should be much obliged."

The agent waved him back to his seat. He had not finished yet.

"You have a great chance, my boy. When I was out there, about fifteen years ago, a man couldn't walk ten yards down the street without some one stopped him and asked whether he wanted a job. Fact. There was a boom on then, of course, but a young fellow should do well there now if he doesn't mind roughing it a bit. It's a great country and a vast country and a growing country!" He opened a drawer and brought out an assortment of literature. "Here, get your teeth into some of these—they'll help you to know what to expect."

Peter thanked him again, and gathering up a handful of expensively got-up productions, made his way into the street. He studied them in a tea-shop, and his enthusiasm grew. Before he left London he booked a Third Class passage on the *Carolina*, sailing for Quebec in four days' time; and with the words "engineman in a lumber camp" large in his mind, purchased a substantially made money-belt at a shop in the Strand. Later he made another concession to the rough-and-ready conditions suggested in Canada

by buying boots instead of shoes. Most of his books, clothes he thought would not be needed, and so on, he sold to make a little more money ; and that night he began his packing, cording and re-cording his trunk with all the care of one preparing for an expedition to the Antipodes. Finally, he pasted on many red and white labels they had given him at the steamship office ; and all was ready.

The ship sailed at noon on Monday. Saturday and Sunday was devoted to saying good-byes. Most of his friends at College had already gone abroad ; but, when it came to parting, it was surprising how many people, high and low, he knew round Rochester ; how deep were his roots, now that he came to tear them up. Some girls with whom he had danced and played tennis were quite emotional. Once he caught tears in grey eyes as he told of his going, and there were nearly tears in his own. He felt he was leaving a sweetheart behind, though he had never been conscious of love particularly before. "I must write to her," he thought. It was painful how decent people were. All wished him luck—the very best, they said. They returned to their comfortable prosaic occupations. Peter sighed. It seemed a pity he was going. He took a mournful pleasure in doing things "for the last time." Then he told people he might be home for Christmas ! They smiled and shook their heads. He was going abroad. He was lost to them.

On Sunday morning he went to say good-bye to the aunts. Passionately observant now, lingering on pang after pang of separation, he noticed every little detail as he walked up the long road lined with neat, well-cared-for trees ; and behind them, as neat, well-cared-for houses—settled civilization in every line of it. England was very beautiful, he thought sadly, as he came on two, towering leafy giants, which were still allowed by the Borough Council to express their souls in freedom. He saw a milk-cart and the milkman leisurely going his round. How nice, after all, to be a milkman, his life, with little uncertainty in it, ordered from the cradle to the grave ! It came upon Peter that his father, wanting him to be a real engineer, expected of him very great things. Adventurers must spend their lives experiencing sentimental pangs.

A moment later he entered the gate of No. 49 and rang the bell.

"Master Peter, ma'am." The servant showed Peter into the first of the aunts. He petted perfunctorily an obese little dog which growled at him.

Aunt Faith held up her cheek. He pecked at it.

"I'm going to Canada," he said.

"Canada ?" (Aunt Faith was slightly deaf.)

"Yes."

"Well, come and see me when you get back."

"I will," he said lamely, and passed on to the others. It was only when he came to Aunt Janet that he felt any affection. Aunt Janet had a sense of humour. She lived like the others in a box of a

room, under-nourished because preparing food was such a trouble for Emily, the maid ; but she could laugh at ~~himself~~ for doing so. When Peter told her he was going to Canada, she seemed to understand many things without being told.

"Don't forget us," she said, taking Peter's hand. "And remember—you can always come home again."

"Oh yes," he answered carelessly.

She turned and fumbled in her bag, then transferred something quickly to his hand.

"Aunt Janet!" Peter hugged her, he hugged her as he had never hugged any one in his life before, not even his mother. Her glasses fell off, but neither of them minded.

"God bless you, my dear, dear boy."

He stumbled out of the house. Why had all this come when he was leaving? Was he—the thought came irresistibly—was he doing an incredibly foolish thing, not even going out to a settled job? He put the thought from him. Canada wasn't Africa. It was a new country founded by the English themselves, one might almost say a second England, save that it was very much bigger and freer. And—he could always come back.

In the afternoon he went for a last walk by the river, taking the tow-path by Cuxton, Halling, and Snodland, to Aylesford. It was always the river he was drawn to in his triumphs and despairs : when he had gained his Colours at football, when he had

failed to be made a School Prefect, in the dark days after his father's death, when he had passed triumphantly his Final and got his first job—and now. The river, slow, winding, calm as a Madonna, changing yet never changing, shining like a shield under the pattering rain. The path wound by the house where he was born and brought up. Altered beyond recognition, it was now, into offices for the cement company. It knew him not.

He turned again to the river. The rain came down harder. The trees bowed their heads, weeping. Then at length the clouds passed, and the river caught the first gleam of the sun. . . .

III

Peter stood on the Third Class deck of the *Carolina*, watching Southampton docks broaden out slowly and as slowly recede. The siren roared a final farewell, and the mournful note went to Peter's heart. For a moment the sense of loss was almost overpowering : he wanted to jump off the ship and swim to land—anything. The moment passed. He mastered himself. With set mouth he stared over the rail. The docks became a mere blurred outline. The ship went on. They were gone entirely. Every one turned their eyes from the old land to the new.

CHAPTER III

LAND was sighted late Tuesday afternoon, and on Wednesday, nine days after they had left England, Peter woke up to find they were well in the St. Lawrence. After doing their packing, every one came on deck to enjoy the best part of the voyage. The sun was shining, the water calm and a sparkling blue. The shores, still a great distance apart, were thickly wooded, with the misty outlines of mountains in the background ; and as they proceeded up, small French-Canadian hamlets, with a white church always prominent, became increasingly frequent. People appeared whom Peter had never known to be on the ship ; they came up from their cabins, where they had retired the moment they came aboard, and basked in the sun. Rugs and blankets were thrown aside. Even old John Polakski exposed his grey hairs to the beneficent rays. There was much laughing and playing, and the deck shuffle-board clicked continuously. Just before lunch Doris Mather appeared in a jaunty red beret.

"I believe I shall like it after all," she said, smoothing kid gloves over her wrists—a token that the voyage was well and truly over and civilization once more in sight.

"I'm sure you will," answered Peter.

They leaned over the rail to gaze at a man in a red knitted cap, like a nightcap, fishing from a small boat. He waved to the ship. Handkerchiefs waved back; cameras clicked. At lunch people jumped up continually to see other sights through the portholes. It was very pleasant.

By one o'clock they were up at Quebec. The cliffs on which the city is perched rose towering from the stream, dividing it into two channels. The *Carolina* blew a long blast on her siren, and two tugs churned forward to take her in tow. Another crossing had been safely accomplished.

In a few moments, like the sudden dissipation of a dream, the social structure built up on the ship vanished. People said good-byes while still in mid-stream, as if they were going to land the moment they touched the dock. Belongings were brought up hurriedly and stacked as a nucleus for a family party, only to be rushed off a few minutes later and stacked somewhere else. Nobody was sure where the gangway would be, but they all wanted to be the first to land. In honour of the occasion some of the Central Europeans had donned their national dress, and up they came now in black velvet jackets and brass buttons, vividly coloured handkerchiefs, and still more vivid shawls, to add a touch of the fair ground to the scene. There was much musical jingling and shouting, and some one started to play a concertina. But after a few bars it stopped.

Like a cloud the word "immigration" descended,

and two officials who had come aboard with the pilot were eyed with fearful respect. The day before every one had been examined for vaccination marks, and many were the jokes passed.

"I made three dents in my arm with a sixpence," said one man, "and fooled them all right." All roared with laughter.

But it was different now. The Canadian doctors were reputed to be hard, nearly as hard as the American. Suppose one was not allowed to land after coming all this way! "The immigration" became a catchword for the whole official business. "The immigration ought to let us in easily"; "I hope the immigration won't take long" . . .

Peter went with Walters to say good-bye to old John Polakski, and found him seated on a box, a calm centre amid a whirl of confusion.

"They all go mad," he said, with a nod of contempt at some of his compatriots.

"I hope you make Calgary all right, John," said Walters.

"I get there," replied the old man.

They both shook him warmly by the hand, and Peter felt quite sorry to part. It had been a pleasant habit: the morning conversation with old John. It was extraordinary how used to the ship he had got in ten days. Instead of a mere passage across the ocean, as he had first regarded the voyage, there were half a dozen friends to be bidden farewell; and most of all there was Walters, who was going to Nova Scotia and would not take the Montreal train.

They exchanged addresses, Peter giving "care of the post office" at Winnipeg.

"Well, good luck. Let me know how you get on."

"I will," said Peter.

Then he went to find Doris and help her bring her suitcases on deck.

"How much should I give the dining-room steward?" she asked.

"I've given him ten shillings."

"Then I'll do the same. Could you lend it to me? I can't get at my money easily."

Peter complied. By the time she returned the ship was being warped into her berth, and the moment the hawsers were fast great nets were spread across the gap between the side and the quay, and unloading began. Cabin trunks, the less reticent property of the immigrants: household gods, from amorphous bundles to tables and chairs, interlocked with mail carts—all were hoisted out in nets, swung high in the air, and dumped on the quay side, from where they were wheeled into the customs sheds and placed under the initials of their owners. Winches clattered. Stevedores shouted. Handkerchiefs waved to others on the quay.

Already the First Class were landing, but that is what they paid for. The Third had to content themselves for the present with wild rushes towards the gap in the ship's side, and were swept back again by perspiring stewards who adjured them beseechingly, "Not yet, not yet—Stay where you are—We'll tell you. . . ."

Finding there was no immediate hurry, Peter went up to the top deck for a view of Quebec. Tier on tier, like the seats of a theatre, the city rose up : the sheds and docks and short, steep streets and cramped dwellings of the old town forming the stalls, with here and there the tall bluff outline of a modern grain elevator—surely the biggest bare-faced monument to the great god Utility ever erected ! . . . A line of dark cliff, almost sheer in its ascent to the ramparts ; and then Dufferin Terrace, like a neat white coping-stone, and a curbed gallery of roofs, topped by the imposing towers of the hotel, Chateau Frontenac. High up on the left was the ancient Citadel, a grim-looking fortress with loopholes in the walls. Seen thus, this gateway to the new world did not seem so very different from one in the old—from Folkestone, say, with its upper and lower towns. People were moving about as people moved at home : cars were running about the quay. Everything seemed settled and prosperous.

About three o'clock the stewards passed the word round to have landing cards and vaccination certificates ready, and shortly afterwards a procession began to file slowly down the gangway.

They were landing at last.

Peter heaved a sigh of relief and picked up the bags. He formed in behind a stout lady in black, who seemed to be expressing in French, and with many gestures, her opinion of the whole business.

"Now we are getting on," he said to Doris. She nodded. She was rather pale, and nervously twisting and untwisting her gloves.

"I shall be glad when we're past the doctors."

At the bottom of the gangway stood several clergymen representing various denominations. One, pink and white, smiling, unmistakably Church of England, stepped forward and shook hands with Peter, whose creed must have been as equally obvious. It was his official welcome to Canada. Then he tramped after the others along long, resounding iron-roofed corridors to the immigration halls.

Here he was forced to realize that even as motion pictures must be capable of making an appeal to the lowest intelligence in the audience, so must the method of dealing with immigrants be accorded to the lowest species among them;—in other words, they must be treated like so many heads of livestock. First segregated into sexes, they were subdivided into bare compartments, like huge iron cages, smelling strongly of soap and disinfectant, and their attention was directed to the benches provided.

"Siddown!" yelled an official continually. "Siddown!—Siddown! . . ."

Gradually every one sat down, with much shoving and chattering and comparing of positions, and Peter found himself next to a little Cockney, who promptly produced an orange and began to suck. Oranges seemed to be his panacea for most of the cares of life.

A long wait followed.

One by one (and with many rushes before it was realized that one by one really meant one by one) they were marshalled before the medical board ; and meanwhile the temperature mounted steadily. September in Canada might have been June in England, and soon the heat was unbearable. The odour of disinfectant was overpowered, and that of oranges and food of all kinds, perspiring bodies and new clothing, and other less traceable odours, floated across the room in heavy waves. Peter mopped his streaming face. If only he were out of this horrible place. . . .

At last his turn came, and thankfully he left the cage, passing down between two railings to a table where a doctor was sitting.

“ Vaccination card ! ”

He produced his card, and it was stamped.

“ Hands ! ”

He thrust out his hands, and they were closely inspected between the fingers ; then the doctor peered at his eyes—“ Open wide ”—nodded, and waved him on. He was free. The ordeal was over. And not nearly as bad as he had expected : he had thought he might have to undress.

Outside in the customs shed he found Doris after some little time. Her face was flushed and angry-looking.

“ Have any trouble ? ” he asked.

“ A bit—they made me stand aside. I had to undress. Well, thank heaven it’s over. Let’s get our things through here.”

The customs presented no difficulty at all. Evidently immigrants were not considered likely to bring anything of much value into the country, for the French-Canadian officials chalked the magic signs of freedom on the trunks with almost uncomplimentary haste.

When this was done Peter set about having the luggage—he found it was called “baggage”—dispatched; and made the acquaintance of that most admirable of Canadian institutions, the baggage transfer system. Instead of the multiplicity of taxis, porters, and labels that clog the transport of luggage from one railway to another in England, one simply notified the express company the house or station to which the luggage was consigned, and there, as far as the traveller was concerned, the matter ended. He could take his luggage all round Canada with as little trouble as a newspaper. The baggage men and an admirably organized transport system did the rest.

With the same convenience in organization, the trains started from just outside the sheds. Peter collected the portable baggage and, with Doris behind him, followed the crowd on to a long platform. The Montréal train, he found, went at four o'clock. So they prepared to wait. From somewhere a bell like a church bell tolled slowly, then it stopped. Towering freight cars on the next line shut off the rest of the station like a wall. There was a vastness about everything and a calm like a perpetual Sunday. When a journey across

the continent to Vancouver takes five days, and Montreal, the next city of importance, is about a hundred and fifty miles, there can be none of the continual bustle and noise one finds at Euston, say, or Paddington, with trains arriving and departing every few minutes. Track I.—Track II.—Track III.—said the notice boards majestically ; and the very word "track" seems to suggest illimitable space.

"Look," said Doris suddenly, "what a huge engine !"

She pointed to a locomotive stealing softly down. Compared to the ones in England it was enormous, with a tender on the same high-pitched massive scale. Round the boiler were all manner of pipes and tanks, to unaccustomed eyes attached haphazard, as if to see how they looked that way before fixing them permanently.

The engine passed them, drawing a long train, and came to a standstill ; and they entered the Colonist coaches—huge parlour-like affairs, with a wide aisle down the middle, and double seats disposed on either side like pews. Racks above, which could be pulled down, provided ample accommodation for their hand luggage, but, as Peter found later, the chief use for these racks was as bunks.

A conductor came down the aisle clipping tickets. He produced checks for them, and to Peter's surprise, instead of handing one to him, slipped it into his hat-band. Doris burst out laughing, and he looked up at the conductor, wondering if it were supposed

to be a joke ; but no, the man's face was perfectly serious, even thoughtful : without saying a word he went down the coach doing the same thing—once he picked a hat off the floor, stuck it on the owner's head, still without a word, and slipped the check in. Evidently another proof of the low estimate of the immigrant's intelligence.

Soon after the train started. Without a whistle, without fuss or bother—just a long cry of "All a-bo-o-ard," it stole out of the gloom and into the sunlight, clicking gently through the labyrinth of streets and crossings of old Quebec.

Peter caught a glimpse of the *Carolina*, deserted, her tall funnels standing above the quay. In a few days she would be home to another lot of passengers.

"First call for dinner—First call for dinner . . ." A negro attendant passed down the train, his soft Southern voice appealing to the passengers and receiving a blank stare. Most of them produced cakes and fruit—a last grateful tribute to the cuisine of the *Carolina*.

"I do feel hungry," said Doris. She beckoned to the attendant. "Where is the dining-car ?"

"Straight through the train, madam. Four coaches down."

"Come along then, Peter. Let's have something to eat."

The pink-shaded hand lamps and luxurious appointments of the dining-car caused Peter slight misgivings, as did the sudden rise in social status of his neighbours, for the train hauled rich and poor,

parlour cars, tourist, and colonist, in its mighty length; but he dismissed them, and they ordered a good dinner. The sense of adventure was strong on them both, and the ship provided ample topics for amusing conversation. "I wonder where old John is," said Peter, and they both went into fits of laughter as Doris described how she had seen the old man sitting, imperturbable as ever, in the middle of the customs shed, calmly fishing dainties out of a bag.

As they drank their coffee Peter felt at peace with all the world. Doris, flushed and pretty in the provocative red beret, was smiling at him. Several men, he noticed, had glanced in her direction. But she was obviously bent on entertaining *him*. They lit cigarettes and began to feel very much at home on Canadian trains.

But with the bill came an abrupt drop in temperature. It was all Peter could do to refrain from whistling with surprise. It was seven and a half dollars.

"Much?" said Doris carelessly, then, without waiting for an answer, took out her compact and began powdering her nose.

Peter handed the waiter seven dollar bills and two silver quarters, then finding that he still lingered, looked up.

"Yes?"

"You've forgotten the waiter, sir."

Peter flushed. "I think the charge is more than enough already."

The man scowled and went away, muttering something about "dirty immigrants."

"You did quite right not to tip him," said Doris severely; "he was most insolent."

Peter made no reply. He was making some rapid calculations. He had changed his money with the purser on the ship, and after tips — Doris had casually borrowed another ten shillings for her stewardess—he had left just fifty dollars. Then it had seemed a vast sum—infinitely more than ten pounds, which was about the English equivalent; but now the scale had dropped the other way. Seven and a half dollars for dinner!—three dollars and seventy-five cents each. If the rest of his expenses were on the same scale he would be penniless before he reached Winnipeg.

When they returned to their coach, Doris made no further reference to money, and seemed to take it for granted that he should pay for her meals. Peter was not mean, he was willing enough to share what he had, but he wondered how she thought he was placed. He had been vague about his job, not caring to discuss it with her, but she must understand. . . . At first he had been secretly rather proud of her dependence on him: It made him feel a man of the world. There was something disturbing about her too, which attracted him in spite of stern self-repression: the way she moved, her scent, her slight pressure against him when they were alone together, a hundred subtle little things. She never forgot she was a woman. Her every glance meant

something ; and she spent her days collecting glances, from whomsoever bestowed, with the avidity of a connoisseur after art treasures. And at the end of the day unconsciously she would reckon them up and docket them : admiration, desire, indifference.

The girls he had met in Rochester, the girls he had taken to College dances, the sisters of some friend, were "sensible" girls, and as such thought it nice, or perhaps were bred, to have their interests as much like a man as possible. They played tennis with frank and furious energy ; they golfed ; they tramped ; and were much given to velour hats, nigger brown, and substantial brogues. In many cases, also, good works. Above all, they were taught to conceal their feelings, lest men should think they were running after them. Beyond a romantic tendency, which was strong in him, Peter had never felt a desire to kiss them.

With Doris he was shy or breezily cheerful ; alternating between the tenets of his upbringing : a protective chivalry towards all women, whether they wished it or no, and the tremendous things which he thought vaguely as belonging to the region of the thirties. Marriage. Once or twice he had caught her looking at him, her eyes half-closed, as if she were speculating on something. . . .

She leaned back in her seat now, two black silk-stockinged legs (she never seemed to wear anything but silk) crossed sleekly, gazing absently out of the window, her underlip caught up in her teeth. He wondered what she was thinking about.

Suddenly she turned to him and smiled. "I wonder what Montreal will be like?"

"I don't suppose we shall see much of it—I'll see you safely into the Toronto train."

"There's no hurry about that." She yawned. "Oh, I'm tired. That awful place." She rested her head against the corner and closed her eyes. Presently she slept.

Peter stared out of the window. The train was swinging along with an easy, swaying motion, like a well-mannered pack mule, carrying them through mile after mile of rich agricultural land; now rolling outward in gentle waves like the folds of a green and brown striped blanket, and dotted at intervals with stone houses and farm buildings, solid and heavy as the French-Canadian habitants who had built them; now still thickly forested, with a quicksilver gleam here and there of rushing water. The engine whistled hoarsely—a peculiar deep melancholy note that sounded for miles and seemed in keeping with this mighty land.

Peter nodded his head to the clacking of the wheels. "Mile after mile—mile after mile—mile after mile," they seemed to say.

An eventful day, he thought. But for good or ill he was in Canada.

CHAPTER IV

IT was dark when they reached Montreal, and they found then, to Peter's dismay, that the Toronto train did not leave till next morning ; which meant that they would have to stay the night at a hotel.

"Never mind," said Doris cheerfully, "it'll give us time to see the town."

Peter made no reply. He was anxious to get to Winnipeg and see what his letter of introduction could do for him. For a moment he wondered if he could say good-bye to her ; then the moment passed, and he felt ashamed. One couldn't leave a girl alone in a strange country with no friends to go to. At his tentative suggestion that he should find a hotel for her first then get a place for himself, she gave a decided negative.

"Why shouldn't we stop together ? There's no Mrs. Grundy to bother us now. Besides, I'd be afraid alone. You remember what Mr. Blenkinson said."

Mr. Blenkinson had told a lurid story of how two English girls had landed in Montreal late at night and found a room near St. Antoine Street, a not very reputable part ; and when they looked under

the bed a coffin was there with a dead man in it. Terrified, they had flung up the window and screamed for the police. Later, the woman had been indignant. She needed money badly. The man was her husband ; he was dead and could do them no harm. . . .

"All imagination," said Peter, rather shortly. "Blenkinson made it up."

But he was too weary to argue further. They discovered a row of small hotels up Windsor Hill, and chose what seemed to be the best. The desk clerk, a long, laconic individual in his shirt sleeves, manifested no curiosity whatsoever as to their relationship—for the very good reason that in the smaller hotels and rooming houses the guest pays when checking in, and the room is then his to do any mortal thing in provided no disturbance is created.

"Three dollars," he said. "Yeah—dollar fifty each room. . . . Q'u." He flipped the bills as if to indulge in a conjuring trick, then thinking better of it, slapped them in a drawer.

They followed the chambermaid upstairs to two rooms which were bare of everything but essential furniture. A Gideon Bible reposed black and shiny on each bare dressing-table.

Half an hour later they met downstairs, and finding there was no restaurant in the hotel, walked up the hill to a cafeteria, where they found they were expected to serve themselves. This involved carrying a tray round a large table on which food

was piled ; and having gauged their appetites they filed past the cashier—or rather, Peter did. Doris unconcernedly stood aside. Again she seemed to take it as a matter of course that he should pay for her.

He ate his dinner deep in thought, penetrated now and then by Doris's voice, which, talking more freely, lost some of its refinement. She mispronounced words. Once she said "done" instead of "did."—Something he had not noticed before.

It was obvious that he would have to tell her soon about the state of his finances. She wished to put off going to Toronto to-morrow and spend the day sightseeing. But he was too sensitive to bring the subject up baldly.

"A holiday'll do us good," she said, when he hinted that he would have to get to work. "Goodness knows, I may have to work hard enough."

Peter put off the attempt till later.

An opportunity came in a way he never expected. They returned to the hotel directly after dinner, and Doris asked him into her room to unfasten a strap ; then no sooner were they inside when she collapsed on the bed.

"I'm so unhappy," she sobbed.

Peter bit his lip. "You'll feel better later on," he said awkwardly.

She made no reply. She turned over on her face and sobbed in a dull, hopeless kind of way.

He regarded her a moment, then went and sat down on the bed.

"I say, you must buck up, you know—things'll be better in the morning."

She shook her head slightly, and went on crying.

Peter watched her, conflicting emotions within him. Finally he stretched out a hand and touched her shoulder.

"Here, you must stop crying or you'll make yourself ill."

"I don't care."

Peter got up. "I'll—I'll get you something from the chemist's." He tried not to show relief in his voice.

She clutched his arm. "No, don't leave me." With a swift change of mood she sat up and patted her hair.

"You like me, don't you? Suppose we don't leave here at all: what would you say?"

"Don't leave here . . ." For a moment Peter did not comprehend. "But we must; you're going to Toronto and I'm . . . You mean—*marry*?"

"Yes."

"But we can't. I don't love you, and besides, I haven't enough money." There, it was out. "I'm very nearly broke."

"You're broke!" She stared at him—at his new, well-cut grey lounge suit, which had been a last extravagance, and which gave him a false air of prosperity—then to his surprise burst out laughing.

"And I thought . . . Well, aren't I a little fool!"

"I'm sorry," said Peter stiffly.

"Sorry!" She laughed again. "You ought to

be glad. I was only kidding you. And now I shall be glad if you'll get out of my room. Not that I'm particular, but there are limits!"

He went to the door.

"I shall be glad to see you as far as Toronto."

She looked at him with mocking, red-rimmed eyes.

"Thanks, your lordship, but I think I can do without *you* this time."

He went out. He paused outside with his hand on the knob, then went in again. "Of course, I shan't leave you."

"Go away," said Doris.

The door closed. She listened a moment, then lay back with a long shuddering sigh. The brief hope that Peter represented was gone. Drearly she wondered what would happen to her. Her father had bundled her out of England without pity. She remembered his face when she had had to tell him about Bob—Bob who had loved her and left her, and got himself put in prison, all in one glorious burst. Her father's face had gone livid. He, a future Town Councillor, a man respected by Church and Laity, the father of a loose woman! He hated her. He could have killed her. She knew he wished she were dead that moment on the floor. When her mother ventured to put in a word he shut her up like a wild beast, then rummaged in a drawer for a letter that had come from Canada—from the Dodds, at Toronto, who were distant relations and had made some remark about wanting a governess. Out she

should go to them, and if they repudiated her, well, she would be away from England when her disgraceful child was born !

She was dragged almost by force into a cab, her passage to Canada booked, and flung a few pounds. The next day, in the grey dawn, her father left her at Southampton. She was dead to him.

She wondered now how many lies he would tell —how he would account for her disappearance. Then she thought about the Dodds. What they would do. She wondered drearily if illegal operations were performed in Canada ; and if so, how much they cost. She did not blame Bob. He had acted according to his lights. So had she. She did not think of Peter either. Though undeniably good-looking, he was a “stick.” He had not even kissed her.

Back in his room, Peter opened the window and gazed out on the crowded street. Fierce and strong roared the voice of Montreal. Lights blazed, hard and bright as a jeweller’s window. Round the corner, by Bonaventure Station, trams—they called them street cars here—rattled and banged continually, then ground their way up past the hotel to Dominion Square. Farther to the right, past the station, twinkled the lights of the yards. He gazed at them absently, his hands dug in his pockets.

“Marry,” he muttered. “Good Lord !”

He had not the faintest intention of marrying any one for years. He had come to Canada to work. He was filled with enthusiasm for the great things

he meant to do. Women scarcely entered into his plans at all. But for all that he felt vaguely dissatisfied. Peter was not temperamentally cold. So far the great secrets of life and birth were hidden from him. But he felt them there. He linked them up with spiritual love. In the creed he had learned at school effort came first. The development of character was above all things important. Anything else came after. A boy who slipped from these standards was a "randy blighter," or some such opprobrious term. Peter had not slipped. And for all he was now twenty-three, he still had the same standards. A man thought of love when he was ready to marry. Not till then.

But apparently this belief was by no means general in the world. Doris had set out to attract him by arts which would have set him quivering but for his rigid self-control. Highly imaginative and sensitive, not a gesture, not a slight pressure against him, was lost. He could have flung his arms round her as she lay on the bed. He could have kissed her full red lips. He could, in fact, have surprised her, for all she seemed to think him so slow.

The curtain that lies so delicately between adolescence and greater knowledge moved a little. Dimly he felt there might be trouble for him later. He set his course. For one moment he had thought of going back. . . . He was not going to give way to a girl he didn't love. In that minute he had the most glorious thing in youth : its proud challenge to the world. Come on everything. I am I.

With resolvé firm in him, he took his hat and went downstairs. It was too hot to sleep yet. And after the confinement of the ship he wanted to stretch his legs again. He turned up the hill ; and all at once the great illuminated cross on the summit of Mount Royal came into view. In his present mood Peter was profoundly moved. The Cross was magnificent, sublime. He felt divorced from circumstances, present or future. He felt capable of anything ; the topmost heights. The Cross inspired him, as it had in its time a thousand others. Doris was forgotten, and the sordid contacts of the immigration shed. He quickened his pace, paused to ask his way from a policeman at the intersection of St. Catherine Street and Peel ; and began the stiff climb up past McGill University. Soon the last lighted thoroughfare was left behind, and he came to the road winding up through a dark avenue of trees, which leads to the summit of the mountain.

Once at the top, he stood on the wide stone lookout and gazed down. The view was magnificent. Lights in gradually diminishing numbers stretched for miles. Two long, bright rows across a faintly phosphorescent band showed where Victoria Bridge crossed the St. Lawrence ; and for a moment he thought the lights were moving towards him, then saw that it was a train. On a tall building to the left an electric sign blazed and went out ; only to reappear a moment later as if it had thought of a new and startling effect. But there was nothing aggressive in it ; it seemed a last link with humanity.

After the noise of the city all was infinitely lonely and peaceful.

Peter stood against the parapet, drinking it in, feeling the creative impulse in him quicken, feeding an ambition that led to the stars. Dear God, he would succeed, make a name for himself in this great country—perhaps be the great engineer that his father had hoped. . . .

He turned at last to descend and entered again the dark shadow of the trees. His footsteps rang out sharply on the hard road. There was a crackle of twigs in front, and he paused to listen. Some animal, he thought. Then, before he could realize what was happening, a man glided out from the trees and something bright flashed in his hand.

"Put 'em up, buddy. C'mon, make it snappy!"

Peter hit out, and received a heavy jolt in the ribs.

"Do that again, bud, and I'll give you the works!"

Peter was still. He could see the man's eyes shining queerly in the darkness.

"C'mon now! Lift those hands!"

Slowly Peter obeyed. Expertly the man ran through his pockets—How he thanked God he had left his note-case at the hotel!—and pulled out two dollars and some change. Then he stood away.

"Beat it!"

Peter clenched his fists. To be robbed in this bare-faced way! The other showed his teeth. He flashed the pistol. "Cool off, brother," he advised.

Peter realized the hopelessness of retaliation. He

turned and walked away. There was a crackling of twigs behind ; then silence.

At the top of Mountain Street Peter met a policeman, strolling along, twirling his night-stick. Excitedly he recounted his loss. The policeman, a big French-Canadian, with flat features and a blue chin, interrupted :

“ What ees de mattaire ? ”

Peter started again, more slowly. “ And he’s on the mountain now,” he concluded. His eye went to a revolver in a leather holster on the officer’s belt.

The man shrugged. “ Maybe yes ; maybe no. Yo go dere at night you one beeg fool. But I will report eet.” He took out a note-book. “ Give me your name and address.”

“ But surely . . . ” Peter expected him to start a search at once.

“ You should be more careful, meester.”

He took particulars, then closed the book. “ I will report eet.” And he continued on his beat, still twirling the night-stick. Apparently he was equipped chiefly for bandits that met the eye.

Peter glared at his back—common sense told him that he would never see his two dollars again—then swallowing his anger as best he could, he tramped back to the hotel and went straight to bed. The suddenness of the attack appalled him. Canada was giving him a bad start. For a long time he lay on the hard mattress, vainly trying to sleep ; then at length he dropped off. From the summit of Mount Royal the Cross blazed unwinkingly into the night.

CHAPTER V

THE next morning Doris had apparently forgotten the scene of the night before, for she appeared downstairs in quite a cheerful mood; so cheerful, in fact, that she twitted Peter on his woebegone appearance.

He attributed it to a headache—which was true—and forebore to mention the hold-up. It would do no good, and he had no desire to show how he had been outwitted. Instead, he remarked on the peculiarities of hotel life in Canada. Both had left their shoes outside the door, expecting them to be cleaned, and when Peter, who found his in the morning just as they were, mentioned it to the proprietor, he received in reply an amused stare.

“Lucky they weren’t stolen, buddy. If you want ‘em cleaned, you’ll have to go to a shoe-shine parlour. There’s one in Windsor Station.”

A similar misunderstanding occurred to Doris, and in addition, she rang the bell for the chambermaid, confidently expecting breakfast in bed. When the chambermaid had recovered from such a request, she explained that not only were no meals served in the rooms, but that she, Doris, would have to go out to a café if she wanted as much as a cup of tea.

The smoking-room might have been a relic of the old Klondyke days. Round the floor were enormous brass spittoons, and the walls were hung with framed texts : "In God we trust—all others cash"; "Don't swear. Not that we care a damn, but it sounds like hell to others." And so on. In the window were huge oak chairs, like thrones, where one might watch the pageant of the street; and men habitually sat there like so many statues. But in a city with hundreds of hotels, good, indifferent, bad, and very bad, their choice had been fortunate. The place was clean and respectable, and the proprietor honest.

To Peter's relief, he found that the Toronto train went at ten; and immediately after breakfast he escorted Doris to the station. Then for the second time she broke down.

"I'm homesick," she confessed, and sobbed openly in the waiting-room.

"Buck up," said Peter nervously, "you'll be all right when you get there. If you like I'll send your people a telegram telling them what time you'll arrive."

She wiped her eyes with a slightly soiled handkerchief. He could not help pitying her, though he never guessed the cause of her trouble. He thought he had been selfish in wanting to get rid of her, and was anxious now to make amends. It was on the tip of his tongue to offer to accompany her to Toronto, but mercifully for him he refrained just in time, for she put away her handkerchief with a long sigh; and passing from tears to happiness

in a moment, became absorbed in powdering her nose.

"Write and tell me how you get on," he said.
"Care of the Post Office, Winnipeg, will find me."

She reddened her lips carefully, then held up the mirror to see the effect. "I know I shall hate it. But mother said they have only one child."

"Do you have to help your mother?"

"I did," she said evasively. "Goodness only knows what they will think when I turn up in this dress. It's all creased. I must borrow an iron somewhere."

"Why did you come?" he asked suddenly.

"You'd be surprised."

There was a pause, then Peter, who thought he had been unduly curious, changed the subject. "Well, mind you write, and when I'm able to help I shall be pleased to do so."

"That'll be all right. Thanks for what you have done."

She shut her bag and gathered her luggage together. Peter carried it for her to the platform. The train came in and he said good-bye. The last he heard of her was a sharp click as she opened her bag again. A faint perfume of lilac clung to his coat as he left the station.

His own train did not go till the afternoon, so he occupied the time in seeing something of Montreal; starting east along St. Catherine Street, the principal thoroughfare, going down Bleury, and thence by

way of Craig Street to Place Viger—a delightful old square planted with trees. He was struck by the rapid transition from new to old and back to new again, from the towering modern buildings, in the American skyscraper style, of the banks and department stores to ancient churches and warrens of secretive streets—products of a bi-lingual population, which, like man and wife, have learned to rub along together.

"St. Catherine Street," said the name plates; and on the opposite side; "Rue Sainte Catherine." "Rue Montaigne"—"Mountain Street."

And at the street corners rival newsvendors, French and English-speaking, would try and shout each other down : "Star"—"La Presse" . . .

It was all novel and interesting.

Montreal is one of the most remarkable and beautiful of the cities of the New World, and the Cinderella of all great cities—the last perhaps because she combines so much of each. The New Yorker walks down the financial district and sees Wall Street again in the narrow, many-storeyed buildings that flank St. James Street ; "Rome," says the Italian condescendingly, as he gazes at St. Peter's Cathedral (built to a scale of one fifth) ; "Paris," thinks the Frenchman, as he walks round Place d'Armes and into the vast gloom of Notre Dame, and hears his own language spoken everywhere east of St. Lawrence Boulevard ; and "Liverpool," says the Englishman, when he goes down to the docks, and amid the maze of sheds, basins, and grain elevators, sees

the preponderance of the British Flag and the old familiar names : Cunard, White Star, Furness Withy.

But there is much to love in Montreal of her own. Peter could have spent days looking round. He noted the beauty of some of the street names : Lagauchetière, De Chateaubriand, Françoise Barry, just Grey Nun. The English spoken, however, was the English of America. A shop became a store, a pavement a sidewalk, a cinema a movie show. Even in the street signs was this apparent. "Ralentissez !" said the French politely ; and when one was delighted to obey, the English underneath said bluntly : "Drive Slow," and the effect was lost. "Slowly" would have meant two extra letters.

He returned "uptown," another Americanism in use, by way of St. Lawrence Boulevard, which divided, roughly, the French-speaking and the English—a noisy, vital thoroughfare of shooting galleries, cheap shops, and cinemas, and parading women, obviously French, who eyed him with sliding glance. One or two spoke to him. Peter went a little red and shook his head. For some reason he felt absurdly young. So obviously this business was considered of importance. The most painted-up girl didn't look ashamed. Some were really charming. Two tall pretty girls, dressed, with distinction, in black, walked slowly past. They looked towards Peter, not invitingly but appraisingly. Unconsciously he straightened himself, moved with a swing, proud of his strong body. The nearest one

fastened her eyes on him till he was by. He didn't want her, but damn it, he could have her if he liked ! All at once he became aware that living, as distinct from working, was an intensely interesting business.

A chance seat in Dominion Square set him talking with another Englishman, or Old Countryman, as he found they were usually called.

" What's your line ? " asked the man—Somers, he introduced himself as, and spoke with a cultured accent.

" Engineer," said Peter.

" My dear fellow," Somers laid his hand on Peter's arm, " I don't want to depress you, of course, but engineers, British engineers, are the one crowd this country doesn't want.

" Be a bricklayer and you will make money—they get eighty cents an hour ; be a policeman and you will go into politics and graft, and make more ; but be an honest engineer and you will make nothing—I know, because I've been out here three years, and I'm an engineer myself."

Peter glanced covertly at his companion's trousers, and was shocked to find them frayed at the bottoms.

" But enough of that," said Somers. " Let's have a drink. I know of an excellent establishment close by."

" Thanks, but I'm afraid I have to catch my train."

" Well then, my dear fellow, I had better say what I have to say at once. To be quite frank, I'm most damnable hard up, and until the next mail

comes in I shall continue to be. If you could lend me a dollar I should be most awfully obliged ; and if you care to leave your name and address I'll send it on."

"I'm afraid I'm not very flush myself just now," said Peter awkwardly.

"But surely a dollar . . ." Somers contrived to appear shocked that such a small sum could present any difficulty.

"I'm afraid even a dollar is of consequence."

Somers drew away a little. "Well, then," he said huffily, "shall we say fifty cents ? That will just get me my dinner."

And Peter, despising himself for his weakness, handed over two quarters ; which were promptly transferred to the nearest tavern. He sternly docked his tea to make up for this, and having learned by experience the price of meals on the train—it might be said here that immigrants were hardly expected to patronize the dining-car—he purchased a supply of sandwiches and tinned beef, and some biscuits euphemistically called crackers—they were soft and soggy, and tasted of soap.

The journey to Winnipeg lasted two and a half days, and at the end of it he never wanted to see a train again. At a steady rumble they covered mile after mile, and the scenery, fine as it was, became but a succession of forests and streams, changing gradually as they neared Winnipeg to the rolling flat land of the prairies. The only exercise the passengers got was when the engine was changed at the division points,

about a hundred and fifty miles apart. This took twenty minutes, and allowed them time to snatch a meal at the refreshment room, and stretch their legs on the platform after. At night they slept in the coaches. The racks above could be pulled down, and the seats pulled out to meet in the middle, forming a wide couch—one could take one's choice ; but as no mattress or bedding was provided, the seats were more comfortable. Nobody bothered to undress except for taking off their boots, and there was no segregation of men and women ; only separate lavatories were provided at opposite ends of the car, and now and again a trainman would pass along to see there was no trouble.

The chief inconvenience was when the train stopped during the night, and the coaches were invaded by hordes of people who expected to sit down ; and if an unfortunate trying to sleep feigned complete insensibility and kept his eyes closed, hoping that the invader would go away and worry some one else, a trainman would shake him till he had to wake up and either retire to a bare rack or sit, yawning miserably, till morning.

The entire personnel of the train was changed at each division point, and this included the boys selling newspapers, fruit, biscuits, and the like. These were paid on commission, and as they neared the end of their run they bothered the passengers, and particularly the immigrants, endlessly, to get rid of their perishable stock.

One boy, a thin, sallow-complexioned youth, with

a predatory nose, was particularly obnoxious in this respect, and thrust his tray under Peter's nose.

"You must eat : you must eat good when you come to Canada."

The inflexion of his voice, his lack of grammar, his whole manner, annoyed Peter intensely.

"Take that stuff away," he said sharply.

The boy smiled.

"Oranges, two for a quarter. Here you are, mister." He dropped the oranges into Peter's lap and held out his hand for the money.

Peter let them roll on the floor. "I said take them away."

"You gimme that quarter or I'll tell the conductor!"

The boy put down his tray and looked round, then, seeing the brass-bound cap of the train conductor appear round the door, called out to him :

"Say, Mr. Sims, this guy won't pay for the stuff he's had, the dirty t'ief!"

The conductor came up. "What's the trouble?"

Peter pointed to the oranges on the floor.

"The boy forced those on me and expects me to pay for them. I'm hanged if I will, and what's more, I shall report him to the company when we get to Winnipeg."

The boy sneered. "Dirty immigrant."

Peter went white.

"If you don't turn this boy out," he said to the conductor, "I shall." He half rose from his seat, but the conductor motioned him back.

"It's all right, ~~mister~~. Here you"—to the boy—"you can leave that tray. You're through. I've caught you at this game before."

When the boy had gone sullenly, he turned to Peter.

"Report him to the company if you must, but it'll mean that he'll not get another job on the railroad. This is the second time he's been caught."

"No, I shan't bother," said Peter. "Thanks for what you've done."

"You're welcome." The conductor strode on his way with a kind of grim good humour peculiar to the train staff on Canadian railroads.

For all that the incident had ended in Peter's favour, it made an unpleasant impression on his mind. It was his first encounter with the "go-getter," that youthful worshipper of the dollar, who will get on at any price; honestly if he can, but if not, at any price.

Some twenty-four hours later he arrived in Winnipeg, the chief city of the prairies; a vast place, with streets tremendously long and wide—the house numbers ran into thousands—intersecting at right angles. There was hardly a curve among the whole lot of them; and a hill would have been a luxury. Somebody told Peter that one could see the lights of Winnipeg at night forty miles away, and he believed it. Portage Avenue, the main thoroughfare, was impressive by virtue of its extreme width and the tall, twenty-storey buildings which

flanked it at the "down town" end—the width and height being accentuated by long, low, single-decker street cars that ran up and down the middle. In the residential areas the modern apartment blocks were well built, with imposing stone fronts, but the houses were mostly of wood on a stone foundation, which in the poorer streets led to dilapidation and a drunken lurching this way and that ; and excepting Fort Rouge, the most beautiful part of the city, where the wealthy had their homes on the banks of the Assiniboine River, there was little variation in architecture—a wide single gable, and long wooden verandas in front. Streets and streets of them.

Peter looked round a little, then began a serious hunt for a home. The usual "digs" found in England—two rooms, with breakfast, tea and supper served in the sitting-room—he found did not exist here. There were hotels for short stays, the Y.M.C.A., and innumerable rooming houses for the big floating population which drifted in and out of the city. No pretence was made at a "home from home." One simply took a room, a furnished (with bare essentials) room, a lonely, self-contained unit among ten or fifteen others, and either cooked on the gas-ring provided or ate out at a cafeteria.

The most important being in a rooming house was the janitor—the caretaker—who occupied an apartment in the basement. The houses were all central heated ; and according to how he stoked the furnace in winter, one either luxuriated in the warm,

opulent tide that rose through a grating in the floor, or lay shivering, with every stitch of clothing piled on the bed. Next to him came the maid of all work. She made the beds and " did " the rooms of the male roomers. Sometimes she was just the sound of a brush and a thin, depressing presence that tapped nervously at the door. " Will you be gettin' up so's I can do yer room ? " Sometimes she was friendly and good-natured, and would darn a pair of socks or help with the cooking of a particularly incompetent bachelor. Sometimes she became more intimate still.

Peter tried first at the Y.M.C.A., but found them by no means low in price unless he agreed to share a room, which he felt disinclined to do with perfect strangers. After trying house after house, some of them full up—the landlady would tell him this with unctuous superiority—some with the wall-paper hanging in strips and a cold, noisome chill like a morgue, some just " queer " ; the door would open a fraction and a watery eye peep out : " No, I don' think so. . . . No, I don' know where you could try "—finally, he got a room in Hargreave Street for three dollars a week, and decided to have his meals out. He knew this was not a good plan ; it would spoil his digestion, but he baulked at the thought of frying eggs and sausages on the tiny gas ring tucked away in the corner.

It was eleven o'clock at night when he had brought up his luggage from the station, and after supper at a café in Portage Avenue, he retired at once to bed.

But, tired as he was, he could not sleep. As the hour grew later, so did the life and noise in the house seem to increase. Doors banged. A telephone downstairs rang for at least five minutes, then footsteps ascended the stairs.

"Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto . . ."

A muttered growl, and the footsteps receded. Then almost at once the telephone rang again.

"Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto . . ."

Peter cursed Mr. Benvenuto, and invested him with a sinister personality. He heard another growl, and again the footsteps receded. There was silence. Peter dozed off. He was awakened suddenly by a woman's voice in the next room.

"Jack! . . . You're hurting me!"

He sat up in bed, his heart thumping. What was going on in there?

A gentle bump against the wall was followed by a sharp smack. Then silence.

Peter strained his ears, but nothing more happened. Slowly he lay back on the pillow. A church clock near by struck two.

CHAPTER VI

WORK—work at last, was Peter's first thought on Monday morning, and immediately after breakfast he hurried down to the Colonization Department in the station. There he found some fifteen to twenty men of all nationalities except, it seemed, English, sitting on the benches against the wall, and staring straight before them with the blank, patient stare of an ox. It was obvious that they were just out; many had bags with them. Peter took his place at the end of the line, and surveying them, was acutely disappointed. They were not at all the class of man he expected to see; most were peasant farmers of the lowest type. There was not one wearing a white collar.

Nevertheless, when his turn came he was confident of making a distinct impression. Surely there would be some opening for a man with a technical education. On giving his name the agent took a letter from a file and read it over, and surreptitiously Peter felt in his pocket for the envelope containing his references.

“Mr. Cochrane—mhmm . . . we can get you a job as hired man. There's a farm out in Humboldt, in Saskatchewan . . .”

"I'm not a farmer, I'm an engineer," interrupted Peter. "Doesn't that letter say something about engineman in a lumber camp? I don't mind what I do for a start."

The agent folded the letter up. "It does, but all the camps have contracted for their men long ago. If you won't take the farm job I've got nothing for you."

"But they told me in London that you would have something for me."

"I can't help what they said in London. The best thing you can do is to try round on your own. If you can't get anything, come to me again and I'll put you on a farm.—Next, please."

Peter went out furious, his hopes fallen to zero. The letter was not worth the paper it was written on. To be landed out on the prairie miles from anywhere would be so much waste of time. He knew absolutely nothing of farm work; and suppose the farmer discharged him at the end of a week as incompetent? If he did manage to stay, the experience would be of little value. He would have to start all over again when he came back to Winnipeg. The only thing to do was to try round on his own. He bought a copy of the *Free Press*, and studied the Situations Vacant column. But it offered nothing more than "experienced boys with wheels"—bicycles, and trade schools imploring you to earn while you learn. He then went into a Public Library, and from the city directory copied out a list of electrical firms; and in quick succession made

four calls. Two of them turned out to be just sales depots—distributing points for goods made in the East, and the others held out no hope at all.

"Winnipeg's dead from the feet up," said the manager of the Sun Electric, the most courteous firm of any. "You've made a big mistake in coming here for work. Far better if you had stayed in the East."

Peter thanked him, and with a heavy heart went to lunch. This business of light lunches and cafeterias, where everything down to two thin slices of bread and butter wrapped in grease paper was measured exactly and clipped on the check, was not, he found, conducive to appeasing a large appetite. He discovered a restaurant in Portage Avenue which advertised a thirty-cent lunch : soup, meat, pie, and—wonder of wonders!—unlimited bread and butter. And here he stuffed himself like a schoolboy, making the acquaintance of raisin pie. Canadian meals differed from English. The staple diet seemed to be pie—apple or raisin pie. At eleven o'clock a man had tea and pie—fifteen cents ; at five o'clock he had tea and pie. If he only possessed a dime—ten cents—he descended to the very lowest of the low : tea and toast.

About two o'clock, when he judged the men he sought would be back from lunch, Peter continued his search ; but the most he could get was an invitation to call again. Another piece of advice was given, and this time in a less courteous manner.

"Trouble with you Englishmen is that you think you know it all. Just because you hold a hammer in a certain way back in London is no reason why we should hold it the same way here."

Peter flushed. Never thick-skinned, he was beginning to feel raw inside.

"I shall do my work in the way most satisfactory to the firm employing me."

"Sure. . . . Well, if you're round, call in again. But as for research (he pronounced it "re-search"), the Yanks do most of that. We do wiring and installing heaters. No research in that. Best you could hope for would be a helper's job at thirty cents an hour."

Peter's heart sank still lower, but he thought it impolitic to show it.

"Thanks," he said, "that would suit me very well to start with. I'll call round in a week's time."

As he went out he heard the manager's voice : ". . . just like the Englishman of thirty years ago. Stiff as a poker. Wouldn't speak to a man if he was drowning if he hadn't been properly introduced."

Peter flushed again, then cursed himself roundly. It was useless to be so sensitive. He would never get anything like that.

It was then five o'clock, so he decided to give up for the day, and after combining tea and dinner in one very modest meal, he went back to his room and

lay down on the bed. He lit a cigarette and gazed dreamily out of the window. It was so pleasant to rest from this business of getting work. They neither knew him, nor cared. He had yet to meet one man of vision to whom he could appeal. He should not have come West at all, unless he wanted to farm. Manufactures were centred in Toronto, Montreal. Winnipeg was a grain centre, a trading centre of the prairies ; apart from that, they lived, as some one had remarked to him, by taking in each other's washing. "I'll go back East," he decided.

But when he went to the station next morning to make inquiries, he found it impossible. Colonist fare from Quebec to Winnipeg was twenty-five dollars—five pounds ; ordinary fare was about forty-five dollars ; and while a man could travel out Colonist as far as he pleased, he could not go back that way. Peter was condemned to Winnipeg until he had got a job of some kind, however humble, until he had saved some money.

The next day he tried again and met with no further success. The same thing happened the day after and the day after that. Meanwhile his money was going ; and it was exactly a week later when he realized with a shock that after paying his rent (he had to pay a week in advance ; no chances were taken of a tenant defaulting) he would have left a dollar and sixty cents. He called again at the Sun Electric, but the manager who had held out a frail thread of hope, now dashed him to the ground utterly.

"Nothing for you to-day, mac. (In Canada, "mac" seemed to be the equivalent of "old man.") Look in again in about a month's time. Business may pick up then."

A month's time! Peter managed to grin, as if a month's time would suit him perfectly well; but outside the grin left his face as if it had been wiped off. By that time he might be dead of starvation. Suppose he did go on a farm—but anything seemed better than that. At all costs he must remain in the city and be free.

After lunch—tea and pie—he went to the *Free Press* building to read the advertisements, expecting the usual meagre line of experienced boys wanted—soon, he thought, they would be advertising for experienced babies—and trade schools. Then at once a notice in black leaded type caught his eye.

"Wanted. Red, full-blooded he-men. If you are a go-getter, clean-cut and aggressive, I can use you. Earnings up to \$5,000 a year. For interview apply to Room 16, Fort Garry Hotel, at two o'clock only."

The Fort Garry Hotel was one of the largest in the city—a most palatial place. The advertiser must have money, at any rate.

The English made Peter wince—he contrasted it with the stately advertisements, say, of *The Times*—and a month ago he would hardly have imagined himself a go-getter. But now he almost ran. Even

so, he found a long line of men in the rotunda, waiting for admission to Room 16, and more were coming up behind him. They were not of a high type. Most had their trousers baggy at the knee, and the few that were well dressed had a strained expression in the eyes ; partly the anxiety that comes to men out of work and uncertain of their next meal, and partly fierce intention, and devil take the hindmost, to be one of the picked. They were go-getters—red, full-blooded he-men !

Peter stood out among them : young, straight, and tall. He was still an Englishman, when any others of his country present had sunk their nationality in the scramble for dollars. In his manner of dress, in the poise of his head, he stood out. He still had ideals ; he was still capable of a generous action with no thought of reward. The only other remotely like him was a little Jew, with strongly marked features. He had his god—the god of music. These were all fools. The public at large were fools, fit to be bled. When he had grasped from them, he could give whole-heartedly to his god. His eyes took in Peter, and there was a peculiar expression in them. Perhaps he was wondering how long the difference in Peter would last.

Steadily the line moved up one and clicked into place. Some of the interviews were quite short, and the men returned looking very glum. Others were lengthy, and the men—chiefly the younger and better dressed ones—wore a confident smile. Some came back shrugging, spoke a word or two to their

friends, and departed. Peter caught the word "racket."

At last his turn came, and he was ushered into a luxuriously appointed room on the first floor. He was conscious of a swift glance of appraisal from a pair of huge horn-rimmed spectacles, then the owner leapt up and shook him enthusiastically by the hand.

"Mister — ? Cochrane. Thank you. Take a chair, Mr. Cochrane. My name is Schenk—National Sales Director of the Gold Seal Hosiery Corporation, of Minneapolis. You have probably seen our full page advertisements."

Peter gave a polite murmur. As a matter of fact, he had not.

"Well, Mr. Cochrane, we are setting up a sales organization in this city, and we need men—good, clean-cut material. All we ask from you is unlimited work and enthusiasm, and we shall share the rewards. . . ." In glowing terms he went on to describe them. Payment was on a commission basis, and a man who showed ability could make forty—fifty—sixty dollars a week. Some of the salesmen in the States made a hundred !

"Englishman, aren't you ? "

Peter started and nodded assent.

"Then you will have to rid yourself of some preconceived notions. Our method is to sell house-to-house. You Englishmen seem to think it begging. Nothing of the sort. You are doing the customer a favour. The greatest factor in American business

to-day is the personal element. Take Mrs. Smith. She goes into a big departmental store to buy some stockings. The salesgirl is busy, crowds jostle her elbow, she gets hot and bothered and can't decide what she wants. Eventually she comes out with something she doesn't want.

"Now the Gold Seal Hosiery, with the aid of its accredited and bonded representatives, brings the best stockings in the world right to her door. In the privacy of her own home she can choose from the sample case, make a match or contrast with the utmost certainty from our patented colour chart, and receive delivery by mail within twenty-four hours. Further, she will have unfailing service afterwards. Our customers are more than customers : they are friends. . . ." Here he rose to the heights of pure idealism. Peter gathered that he would be more than a salesman, pouring money into his own pockets, he would be a benefactor, bringing light and cheer into the home. The horn-rimmed spectacles positively radiated goodwill.

Once Peter tried to interpose a question about the actual details of the work. In vain. Mr. Schenk left all that to the local sales manager. He swept sublimely to a climax, then abruptly descended.
"Five dollars, please, for a bond."

"Bond ?"

Mr. Schenk explained. It was paid to the bond company to ensure the integrity of the applicant. A pure formality.

Peter thought rapidly. Should he or should he

not? In his pocket was only a dollar and a half, but he had a new grey suit; he could sell that. . . . Mr. Schenk drummed lightly on the table with a gold-mounted fountain pen.

Peter decided. "I'll bring it to-morrow," he said; received a flash of gold teeth and another enthusiastic handshake, and was duly enrolled on the Winnipeg force of the Gold Seal Hosiery Corporation, with instructions to report to-morrow morning to Mr. Craile, the sales manager, at the new offices in Portage Avenue.

Peter went out very thoughtful. True, he had a job now, but! . . . Robbed of eloquence and the fascination of horn-rimmed spectacles, it was simply selling silk stockings on commission. But Mr. Schenk had made it sound dignified and important. Peter opened a little booklet he had been given. Page 1 showed a charming white-haired lady receiving a representative into her home. Page 2 showed the representative opening his sample case before an attentive audience—the lady, and two even more charming daughters. Page 3 showed the representative making out an order form. Page 4 showed the ladies removing the stockings from the box. All were smiling delightedly.

Suddenly Peter smiled too. It was a start; it would get him into the ways of the people: he felt an outsider, a foreigner, in this country which certainly didn't wave Union Jacks from every building; and he would make money, save, then return to engineering. His imagination took hold

of the subject. Working early and late, he might sell a dozen pairs of stockings a day ! And how pleasant to work again at anything.

Then, like a cold douche; came the thought of the bond. He would have to take his grey suit at once down to Main Street, where the second-hand clothes shops were.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT ten prospective salesmen were crowded in the offices of the Gold Seal Hosiery Corporation on the eighth floor of the Delmar Building. The offices consisted of two rooms ; one just a stock-room, the other a large bare room facing the street. In this the salesmen were talking and laughing, waiting for the sales manager, Craile. Peter stood in the background. His negotiations for the sale of the grey suit had been only moderately successful, to the extent of six dollars (he was told regretfully that it was the one size there was no call for) ; but it was sufficient to pay the bond. At a desk in the corner a solitary typist was tapping away. She chewed gum steadily, and took not the slightest notice of any one.

At a quarter to nine Craile arrived. He was a smaller edition of his chief, but without the horn-rimmed spectacles. He rubbed his hands together briskly.

"Good-morning, Miss Rottvieler."

Momentarily the gum suspended motion. "'Morn, Mr. Craile."

"How do, boys ?"

A concerted greeting from the salesmen, then each thrust himself forward and tried to sell his per-

sonality as a red, full-blooded he-man. Peter found himself left out with a quiet Scotsman about thirty years old, named MacTaggert, who was calmly smoking his pipe and studying a pocket map of Winnipeg.

"Makes all the difference where you go," he explained. "If you get bum territory like William Street, where all the niggers live, you can do nothing."

Apparently the others thought the same, for they were clamouring for Craile to give them Fort Rouge or the "Down town" district where they might canvas the offices. The din was terrific.

"Boys ! Boys ! Boys !" At the third attempt Craile made himself heard. "Before allotting your territories, I shall give a short talk on selling methods and demonstrate the proper use of samples."

Gradually the din subsided, and presently they were seated round in some sort of order, on the radiators, on a piano (Peter thought that a strange thing to have in a business office). In the corner the imperturbable Miss Rottvieler still tapped away.

As Craile prepared to speak Peter leaned forward eagerly. The older hands looked bored and pared their nails.

"Selling is applied psychology," began Craile. "You want to sell ; more often than not the prospect doesn't want to buy. Maybe she's had a bad night or her husband hasn't kissed her that morning —it all counts. The great thing is to establish confidence. When the door opens, raise your hat, and step back. Unconsciously, then, the woman will

react and open the door farther. When you're in, find out her name. You can get it out of the directory, but a better way is to give your own—so : ‘ My name is Jones—may I inquire yours ? ’ In nine cases out of ten she will respond. . . . ”

At the end of half an hour he distributed sample cases and allotted territories.

“ New men will go out with the old hands to learn the game.”

Peter found himself paired off with a man they called Steve, and they travelled together out to West Kildonan, a suburb populated mostly by Scotch.

Steve was tall, thin, round-shouldered, and had a miserable sniff. Five children and weak lungs had permanently crippled him in the race for wealth, and he eked out a precarious living selling on commission for whatever corporation would employ him. Magazines, brushes, encyclopædias, vacuum cleaners—Steve had tried them all. In England he would have been called a peddler, and indeed his methods were not much better.

“ Any stockings to-day, ma’am ? ” he inquired at the first house they called.

“ No ! ” The door slammed in their face. Peter went hot with humiliation ; but Steve seemed used to it. He merely went on to the next. The same thing happened again. Then Peter ventured a protest.

“ Why don’t you try the way Craile told us ? You know, lift your hat, step back, and the rest of it.”

Steve sniffed. "It don't make no difference."

At the tenth house they succeeded in getting a hearing. The daughter bought a pair of black "full-fashioned," and Steve departed in triumph with seventy-five cents—the deposit paid by the buyer, which represented his commission. The remainder was paid "C.O.D." when the stockings were delivered.

Peter's spirits lifted a little. Seventy-five cents from one sale was very good—and no waiting for the money. He considered he could do much better than Steve, he was itching to try. He would certainly introduce more dignity into it.

The next morning he drew his sample case and order book and prepared to set out on his own.

"You're a gentleman," said Craile, "do you think you can get past the servants?" Peter nodded blithely. "Well then, I'll try you uptown on Portage Avenue, from here"—he pointed to a street on the map—"to here. And remember, if you can't sell to the mistress try the maid. A sale's a sale."

Peter agreed, with some inward reservations; and twenty minutes later he essayed his first job in Canada. Confidently he approached Number 1 in the street and rang the bell.

"Good-morning. I represent the—"

Crash! The woman had caught sight of his sample case and slammed the door.

Peter squared his shoulders and tried the next house. Result the same. And at the third. And the fourth. And the fifth.

It was borne on him that because he considered himself of finer calibre than the ordinary salesman—a gentleman, in fact, when poor Steve obviously was not—that did not mean that people would buy from him. Peter could be very charming and persuasive when he chose. They cared not. They didn't want to buy at all for the most part, and wouldn't give him a chance. If they did want to buy, they wished for unlimited time to make up their minds—time which the stores could supply better than a high-pressure salesman.

This flaw Peter was beginning to perceive. To add to his troubles, it was getting cold now; and, besides the double windows that were put on for the winter, the houses had outer doors which slammed to automatically by means of a spring. These made his task doubly difficult. It was like trying to shout to some one across the street.

"The place is lousy with you salesmen," said one woman, when, fearing that the entire street had witnessed his five successive failures, he left the rest of it and tried the next. "Ring, ring, ring, all day. You're nothing but bums."

Peter flushed. The word "bum" is expressive—it means a tramp.

"Good-morning, madam."

The spring door shut with a sharp click.

By noon he had sold nothing. He had not even been inside a house and shown his samples. He felt weak with hunger, and finding a small café, went in

and ordered tea and pie. He seemed doomed now to tea and pie for the rest of his life. Already his cheeks were losing the boyish roundness they had had when he left the ship ; his mouth had tightened, and he was getting used to setting his jaw.

" Well, if it ain't another of you gol-darned Gold Sealers ! "

Peter looked up and encountered a pair of light grey eyes glaring humorously at him from over the partition of the next cubicle.

" I'm one too," said the nasal voice. " Name's Snow."

He came round and shook hands, and sat down by Peter.

" What have you sold ? "

" Nothing," admitted Peter.

" Same here." Snow took off his glasses and wiped them. " I've got the territory on Portage below yours. Of all the gol-darned . . . Say, one old dame I went to called me upstairs. ' I want a pair of silk and wool,' she said, ' flesh-coloured.' Flesh-coloured ! The old cow had legs like pillars —calves all the way down. ' I get ladders here,' she said, and took hold of my hand. I can tell you I told her where she got off at. Yes, sir ! ' I want a cash deposit,' I said, but she said ——"

" What will you have, sir ? "

Snow stopped his narrative abruptly to glare at the menu. Peter noted his small head and sallow, unhealthy complexion. Snow looked up.

" Ham an' eggs," he snarled, and felt in his pocket.

" Got a cigarette ? "

Peter produced a packet, and Snow lit one, inhaled deeply, and subsided suddenly into his chair.

" I come from Yorkshire," he remarked unexpectedly.

Peter stared. " I thought you were an American."

Snow shook his head. He was drawing smoke deep into his lungs. He fumbled in his pocket and brought out a tattered snapshot.

" That's my wife and kids."

Peter gazed at the almost indistinguishable features of a woman and two small children, and wondered what Snow was doing in Canada. The question was never answered. Snow never spoke of his past, except to say that he had been in the War, and Peter, whose own past was as open as a book, realized that inquiries in Canada might not always be welcome.

" Lend me a quarter, will you ? " said Snow, at the end of the meal. " I can get a piece of pie and a pack of cigarettes with it."

Peter demurred. " I'm sorry, but I'm almost broke myself. I've sold nothing yet."

" You will," said Snow, and in the end compromised for fifteen cents, to be repaid to-morrow.

By six o'clock Peter had still sold nothing—he found it harder and harder to imitate the sunny young man in the picture.. If only he could make one sale—just one ! Something to restore his confidence. Smiling afresh at each house was like lifting an intolérable weight at the corners of his mouth. " Good-afternoon, madam. I represent

the . . ." How he loathed it ! As soon as they saw that cursed sample case they would shake their heads and close the door. Persistently he tried house after house, up the street and down, up the next and down. " Come on, have some guts !" he told himself fiercely. He hummed as he waited for a door to open. Faces. . . . Eyes. . . . One girl, her smile of welcome turned to a look of chilling disdain as he started his formula. Unseeingly, he walked for half a street before he could force himself to try again. His inside felt as if it were going through a mangle.

At last, at eight o'clock, he was forced to give up, and hungry and dispirited he tramped back to the office. The rest were already there, and it seemed that luck generally had been bad. But Craile refused to see it. He turned to the only successful salesman among them, a plump, cosy-looking man named Winter, who owned a car and had been given Fort Rouge as his territory.

" C'mon, Wint, give us a song."

Winter sat down at the piano and Craile issued out small chapbooks labelled Gold Seal Hymn Books..

" Now then, boys, No. 1 — the Gold Seal Battle Song. Let's have the roof off ! "

Winter struck a chord, and Craile began to sing lustily :

" Wherever the prospects are found
We Gold Sealers cover the ground ;
Rah, boys, rah !
Rah, rah, rah !
Marching down the street singing
Rah, rah, rah ! "

From Steve the "rah" sounded like a sniff.

Peter listened, incredulous. Here were a dozen men, broke, some of them actually hungry, working at a job that was little more than peddling—and they were being cheered up by singing drivel !

"Rah, rah, rah!" he roared, suddenly and savagely.

Craile gave him a nod of approval. "That's the spirit ! Let her go, boys ! Lift the roof off !"

The Battle Song continued through four verses, then depression settled again. Rapidly Craile flicked over the pages. "No. 6," he said. "Humorous.—Tune : 'The Melody Lingers on.' "

"The sale is ended, but the hell of it lingers on,
All the commish is gone, but the hell of it lingers on. . . ."

Peter got up suddenly and went out. If he stayed any longer he felt he would hit some one. He was followed by Snow.

"Say, I'm gonna have a show-down with Craile ! I'll show him where he gets off at ! He told me there was no such thing as flesh-coloured in silk and wool ! Told me I'd have to cancel the sale and give back the commission ! Well, I'll tell the cock-eyed world !"

Snow's sham Americanisms got on Peter's nerves. He turned abruptly and went off in the direction of Hargreave Street. A nasal voice followed him :

"Where you staying ?" Then again : "Come an' eat ?"

Come and eat ! What could they eat ? Grass ? Peter pretended not to hear, and quickened his pace. The footsteps behind died away.

Alone in his room, Peter flung his sample case on the floor and stretched out on the bed. Fifty-two cents he had. Rent due to-morrow : three dollars. Prospects of money : nil. He gazed out of the window, thankful even to relax. Outside the cold Canadian night, cold Canadian moon, cold Canadian stars spread comfortless, unearthly beauty over city and vast prairie—stretching out, on and on. Another few hundred miles and Regina ; another few hundred miles and Calgary. . . . People fighting with the land for a living, taking in each other's washing, selling silk stockings. . . . Damn fools !

Peter pressed his hands on his stomach. Presently he turned over, and putting his pillow underneath, lay flat on it. Perhaps he wouldn't feel so hungry that way.

At eleven o'clock he was dozing off when the telephone began to ring.

"Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto—Mr. Benvenuto . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

LEAVING political doctrines aside, looking at the matter quite calmly and quietly—surely every man, woman, and child in the world should have enough to eat, should be able, at will, to help themselves to the necessaries of life? Jam, now; jam is a luxury, and depends on personal ambition. Some need it; others don't. But would it stop a man living, as man must live, by the sweat of his brow, if bread as well as water were his for the taking, and, say, soup on Sundays? Look at the food wasted, thrown away. Consider (Peter considered it) the buns wasted at an average tea-party; consider (Peter considered it) the casual way he himself had prodded at good food in the golden days when he had not to care about such things. Consider, impartially, the amount of food allowed to rot because of economic strain and mal-distribution. Consider—and weep!

Hunger gnawed at Peter. He was also furiously angry. He, big and strong, with good muscles, was unable to make the few miserable pennies necessary to keep his stomach filled. He raged up and down his room. He stared out into the bright sunny morning; ordinary as mornings in England are ordinary; but different when you had to make a

living. How gentle England was ! How pleasant to live in ! He stared into the glass ; looked at himself : eyes, mouth, nose, chin. Good-looking, fine-looking, though miserably thin. Yes, good-looking as hell ; he looked something out of a fashion-plate. A Sissy, they would call him here. He always felt so gentlemanly and dignified with the Canadians he had yet met. Well, he would show them he wasn't just another fine, sensitive Englishman to be elbowed into the gutter ! He thought of his father ; that big, bluff personality. Would he have given in ? He would have taken this damned town by the ears and wrenched a loaf of bread (yes, and jam too) out of them. Very well !

Peter swept up his sample case and stormed down the stairs and into the street, determined to sell something to-day if he had to try every house in the city —his own or any one else's territory.

After breakfast, tea and toast almost at one gulp, he started out on Portage Avenue, at the street he had left off last night. The very first house he tried he made a sale.

For the rest of his life he remembered that sale—two pairs of black, full-fashioned. It was so ridiculously easy. The lady invited him in, invited him to sit down, invited him to show his samples. After yesterday it was balm.

" You're just out, aren't you ? " she asked, when she had signed the order book.

Peter admitted it.

" And find the going rough ? "

"It might be better."

"Well, don't despair. My husband and I have been out for thirty years, and we've done well. But for two years we were on the verge of starvation, and Jack—my husband—was glad to get a job swabbing floors. Now he's manager of a bank."

Peter felt cheered. "I shall try and get a real job soon."

"Then don't stay in Winnipeg. A man will hold on to his job here as he will to his Sunday pants. Get out. That's the only way."

"I may be able to get into the Sun Electric. They half promised me something when they have a vacancy. I've got good references."

"References!" The good lady laughed. "They won't care two cents about them. If you can do the job, they say, do it. If not, let some one else. In the Riel Rebellion my husband knocked up coffins for the dead ; ten days later he was behind a counter selling groceries. . . ."

Peter listened to some more reminiscences, then considerably revived by a glass of home-made wine and cake, and a dollar fifty commission, went out to try his luck further. Just before lunch time he made another sale, but it was hard work. This lady was quite willing to allow him to come into the house, she waited with the air of one who has all day to spare while he showed his samples.

"I've just sold two pairs of these, madam." He lifted out the famous black full-fashioned.

The lady fingered them and put them aside. She waited.

Peter brought out the silk and rayon, and then the wool. Still she fingered and waited. He produced a colour chart given him by Craile, by the ingenious use of which one could match any colour under the sun.

Peter stared at her head as she bent down. He wondered what was going on inside it, if anything. He grew reckless. "Our representative in Paris, madam, tells us that this colour"—he pointed to a shade of brown—"is going to be extremely popular this winter. Now if you have a dress you would allow me to match—"

The lady spoke abruptly. "I'll take one pair of silk and wool, this shade."

Peter filled up the order form. Remorsefully he wondered if he had pushed her too hard into a sale. He tried to salve his conscience as she gave him sixty cents, the deposit, by relating a piece of "service talk" Craile had given: "How do you put your stockings on, madam? Standing up? You shouldn't. You should sit down, then when you bend the knees you won't cause ladders—"

Outside he mopped his hot face. "Lord, what a game!"

The afternoon proved barren, though he tried hard. One lady went as far as to lean out of the window.

"You're English, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I think your accent is so funny." And laughing heartily, she shut down the window with a snap.

Peter merely shrugged. He was getting hardened. "I'll get a real job to-morrow," he thought.

Returning to the office, he turned in his sales, and finding there MacTaggart, whom he liked, lovingly filling his pipe (if he had the choice between a meal or a pipe he would choose the pipe any day), walked back with him to the Y.M.C.A.

Conditions there were peculiar. If a man took a room when he was affluent, it was difficult for them to turn him out later when he had no money ; for, as some one remarked, one had only to ask what Christ would have done. So, as long as he paid an occasional dollar to show that he was trying, he was allowed to remain. The third floor, known colloquially as the bum's dormitory, was devoted to such as these : two to a room, bare, rather drab rooms, with a shiny black Bible on each dressing-table ; but provided with comfortable enough beds. Snow stayed there—it seemed he had stayed there for years—and so did most of the Gold Sealers. After a modest supper in the cafeteria in the basement, Peter went upstairs with MacTaggart, and one by one a little clique dropped in. Fraser, wearing a yellow mackintosh without which he was never seen, an educated man of about forty, who certainly didn't live in Canada because he liked the country—a "remittance" Englishman, the worst of all advertisements for the Old Country, hanging on till his dole

arrived, then seen no more for a space. Stenhouse, thin of face and emaciated of body—he was like a living skeleton—possessing, proudly, a cassock. Whether or not he had been properly ordained no one seemed to know, but he had a little shop near the "Y" where he offered for sale tracts and Bibles, and sometimes on a Sunday would assist with the service in some out-of-the-way church. Young, hustling, cheerful, ambitious, a natural protector for Stenhouse, whose particular friend he was, and the one possible salesman, barring Winter, of Peter's acquaintance. And lastly, Loring, thin like the rest, with a dark, mobile, clever face, who wrote poetry for pleasure and greeting-card verse for a living (twenty-five cents a line).

Loring took the floor now. He had just finished a sentimental four-line tribute to Mother, and was bitter with himself and every one else in consequence.

"This country is full of sickly, smarmy, gum-chewing sentiment," he said to Peter. "They have mother's day and father's day, and brother's day and sister's day—carefully fostered by the stores, of course—and at bottom no real home-life at all."

"At sixteen the girls come out, complete with short skirts and silk stockings, sex appeal and lipsticks, and live their own life after dinner. They only come home to sleep. Then periodically they have these touching reunions, with sentiment laid on with a trowel!"

"You wouldn't get a living if they didn't," remarked Young.

"I wouldn't! . . . I would if they read decent poetry!"

"Then write some like that fellow in the *Free Press*," said Young mildly. "They call him a budding Kipling."

Loring flushed red.

"That—that ignorant, uneducated, fat-headed, poetasting—I can't say anything bad enough. Just because he's run some distance faster than some other fool, they dig out some drivelling rhymes he's written and call them poetry! It's pure Main Street!"

"That's fine," said MacTaggert, smiling.

Abruptly Loring deflated. "Sorry," he said to Peter, "but I always go up in the air when I think of that bird."

"Well, he wouldn't get in the *Atlantic Monthly*," said Peter tactfully, "but as to the other, about there being no home-life, I don't know that I agree with you, from the little I've seen yet . . ." Peter had common sense, and was not going to accept such sweeping generalizations. At once Loring engaged him in argument, but neither were much convinced. Loring would listen a moment, say "Yes, but—" and hurry on. He talked and talked. Peter found himself looking at his face, every muscle moving, break up, and reform into new patterns.

A remark from elsewhere sent Loring swinging round. In a moment he was lashing out against immigration.

"The steamship and railway companies are most

to blame, for they stand to make money by it, and they must spend billions on propaganda—colonization departments and all the rest of it. Perhaps you were treated to some, Cochrane. They bring the poor devils out here and there's nothing for them to do—and they won't take them home Colonist fare. It's stick it or starve—mostly starve. Young countries always suffer like hell. If a man hasn't got enough capital to keep him for at least six months he should stay at home."

"But what about farming?" said Peter. "There must be thousands of acres of land waiting to be developed."

"Not without capital."

"Well, a man can work as hired man for some one else until he saves something."

"Listen," said Loring. "I've worked for some one else. Winter before last on a farm in Alberta. The man was a swine. He expected me to sleep in the stables, and when I refused, grudgingly gave me a shake-down in the living-room downstairs. I couldn't go to bed before eleven because he and his wife sat up till then—and I had to get up every morning at five. But that's a detail. He worked me from daylight to dark, and after I'd fed the horses I had to do the chores—chopping wood and so on. Even Sundays weren't my own."

"For a month I stuck it. Then I left—whether I quit first or was fired, I can't say. I had a fight with him over the horses. He used to thrash those poor brutes till he was tired. And when he started on

them because he had driven the wheel of the wagon against a stump, I started on him."

Peter was silent.

"I know what you're thinking," said Loring, after a pause. "The case is one in a thousand—most of the farmers are decent fellows—I'm not the type that makes the best immigrant. Granted, if you like. But I do understand horses. I could do more with that team than he could—and I didn't need the whip. There's too much 'hands-across-the-sea' business with immigration. Sir Some-one-or-other comes out, looks round for a month or two and meets men who are doing well. Then he goes back with glowing accounts. 'Great country for a young man—wish I were young again myself, by Gad !'

"A man shouldn't come out to sink or swim. He should have enough money to take him back if he can't get on. Or his own country should take him home."

"Well, well, well," said MacTaggert, summing up. He and Peter went out together for a few minutes. "What do you think of Loring ?" he asked.

"Some of what he says is true."

"Yes. He's a curious chap, clever but erratic. He can write. I've read a lot. I know good poetry when I find it. And his work is good. He can see things. . . . He may be famous some day if Canada ever recognizes him. She's usually too ready to take, second-hand, the work of a foreigner."

Peter, who respected MacTaggert's judgment, for

something about him, be he broke or not, showed an intellectual outlook, looked at Loring with new eyes when they returned to the room, expecting to see some sign of the spark of genius within him. He was lying on his face, half-asleep, a home-made cigarette smouldering in his hand. He looked incredibly dirty and uncared-for. Poor Loring ! Peter was still in the position to pity some one.

Stenhouse was neither comic nor tragic—he was bizarre. His long, cadaverous body crumpled across the bed, he maintained a steady monologue on the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church, oblivious of conversation around him ; then switching suddenly to the Salvation Army, he engaged the attention of the room as he recited one of their hymns :

“ He was good enough for my old mother,
He was good enough for my old mother . . . ”

The others joined in with a roar :

“ He was good enough for my old mother,
So He’s good enough for me ! ”

Stenhouse beamed at them, and with exaggerated pantomime began on the next verse :

“ He was good enough for my old father . . . ”

Peter was secretly shocked. What manner of clergyman was this ? When later he asked Young, who shared a room with Stenhouse, he shrugged his shoulders. “ I don’t know whether he was ordained or not. He told me once he had had a row with a

bishop. I know he had his legs frozen in a church up North. Say, you ought to see him stripped : he's a ghastly sight ! ”

Peter could well believe it. And the same might have been said of Snow, who began a long story of a black woman who had bought from him a pair of flesh-coloured rayon. Beads of perspiration shone on his face and hands. Peter wondered how long he had to live.

When he left at eleven o'clock, he was followed unobtrusively down the stairs by Fraser, who, though quite friendly, had not talked much and seemed to consider himself superior to the others.

Here with Peter he was man to man. “ Just out, aren't you ? ”

Peter nodded rather curtly. Fraser's *modus operandi*, as MacTaggert had quietly informed him, was to take any new arrivals worth while up to his room and play bridge or poker—though card playing was, of course, strictly forbidden at the “ Y ”—till their money changed hands.

“ Would you care to come up for a drink ? ” he asked ; then as Peter shook his head, added quickly, “ They never come up to our rooms.”

“ Thanks, but I have to get back,” said Peter, and left with a quick good-night. “ I must still look prosperous ! ” he thought, with a touch of humour.

The next morning early he went round to the Sun Electric, and very much to his surprise, the manager agreed to take him on.

"Know anything about radio?"

"A little," said Peter, who had constructed a set of his own.

"Well, when an Englishman says a little, maybe he does. We've got a job out at St. Boniface, and no one to send. If you fix it good you'll get something else. Forty cents an hour, and you find your own tools. Come round at eleven, and I'll have a truck take you out."

Peter bought a screw-driver and a few other small tools, and with ten cents as his sole remaining capital, arrived back at the Sun Electric to find the truck waiting, and a long, laconic individual they called Shorty to drive it. Quickly Peter found the trouble with the set, and was able to report it working satisfactorily when he left.

"All right," said Edwards, the manager, "come round at eight o'clock to-morrow morning. We'll start you on as a helper, I guess, till you dope it out—and remember, what you do in the Old Country is no good here. Do it as we want it, and you'll get along good." His eyes crinkled up suddenly and he felt in his hip-pocket. "Reckon you're near broke, son. Here's two dollars. You can give it me Friday when you get your pay."

Peter thanked him warmly. He had been wondering how he could last out till then.

In many ways Edwards was typical of the Canadian small tradesman: essentially kind-hearted and generous on one side; self-important, with a tremendous opinion of his own ability, on the other. There was

nothing he seemed to like better than to come up to a job some one had bungled. "Out of the way there. I'll fix it!" And eventually, sometimes in the most roundabout way, he would, with all the available helpers rushing to and fro, fetching tools that after all were not required.

But Peter grew to like Edwards, and it seemed that Edwards liked him.

"You can trust an Englishman," he would say. "He'll rile you sore with his airs—but he's straight."

Peter felt like a prince. That half the joy in life lies in contrasts is a platitude, but those who really find it out savour long the enjoyment—watch a self-made man, over a cigar, dilate on his early hardships—and are, for the moment, happy : that elusive state.

He resolved on a good dinner as a celebration. On the way to the café where they served the famous thirty-cent special, he met MacTaggert ; and divining that he had not dined, nor was he likely to as he had sold nothing that day, invited him to join him.

"Feel better now," said MacTaggert, when they had reached the coffee stage. "When a man has been in Winnipeg a few months his wants are simple. . . . What made you choose this particular part of Canada ?"

"General ignorance. It seemed about half-way across."

"Well, Winnipeg's dead from the feet up ; Saskatoon's worse ; and Calgary's unprintable ! Just wait till December comes ; they have no relief here for

single men that don't belong to the city, and you'll see all the bums warming themselves over the gratings outside Eaton's. It's a hell of a place!"

Peter had heard this before ; but he had a job now, which made all the difference.

"I'm through with Gold Sealing anyway," he said. "I've got a real job to-morrow." He gave a few details.

"Well, I wish you luck. But later you'll find it's wait, wait, wait all day, then 'Nothing to-day, boys.' I've had some of it."

Peter did not like this. He did not believe it. He thought his troubles were over now, and all that he had to do was work himself up to the summit. Surely, too, after all he had been through, luck owed him a break, as they called it out here. Perhaps MacTaggart's attitude had something to do with personal character ; he would fail at anything. Later, when they became friends, he had cause to revise the judgment. MacTaggart had brains, education, and ability. His failing was women. He would make money, save it to the point of hoarding, then spend the lot in a weak moment. The mad years of the War—he had held a commission overseas—seemed to have sapped his morale, and, as he himself put it, he had a fatal fascination for pretty ladies ever since.

They parted soon after dinner for Peter to tackle the difficult subject of rent. Sure enough he found waiting for him Pauline, the girl who made the beds.

"Mrs. Hunt wants to see you."

Peter went round to the next house—she had five in a row—where the landlady lived.

" You owe me three dollars, Mr. Cochrane," said Mrs. Hunt, without preamble. " I'd like it now. I never let my rents stand over for a day."

Peter produced a dollar. " I'm sorry, but this is all I can spare. But I've got a job to-morrow, and I'll pay you at the end of the week."

" Is it stockings, brushes, or vacuum cleaners ? "

" None of them." Peter told her about the Sun Electric.

Mrs. Hunt considered. She reminded him of a great bloated spider. Paralysed from the waist down, she was always to be found sitting in her chair. When she moved or how she moved, no one ever knew.

" Very well," she grunted at last. " I'll let it stand over to the end of the week—not a day longer."

Peter thanked her and went out, considerably relieved. Another danger passed. For five days, at least, he would have somewhere to sleep, and something, if not much, to eat. Truly, as MacTaggert had said, after a short experience of Winnipeg a man's wants were few !

To Peter's surprise, he found Pauline waiting outside, obviously for him. Social distinctions seemed to be different in Canada than in England. A servant was as good as any one else provided she were pretty and dressed well, and certainly Pauline was indistinguishable from the smart girls he had seen in Fort Rouge. She was tall and slim, and her features had a

kind of attractive hardness peculiar to Canadian girls. All her wages—and more perhaps—must have gone in clothes, and her hair was beautifully marcelled. When she did the rooms she wore gloves to save her hands ; there was nothing of the slavey about her. In her Cinderella existence she undoubtedly worked hard in the daytime, then with abounding vitality donned her best clothes in the evening and went out like the others. Once Peter had seen her on Portage Avenue. To her smile he had politely raised his hat. "A swell-looking dame," said MacTaggert, who was with him. "The skivvy at our place," said Peter. "That's fine," said MacTaggert, smiling, with so much meaning that Peter had looked at him sharply.

"So she hasn't fired you out ?" said Pauline now.

"No."

"I'm glad." There was a pause. Then : "I shall have to come up and make your bed. I forgot it this morning."

At the top of the stairs his shoulder brushed against her accidentally, and he felt her rub herself against him as a cat does.

"It's dark, isn't it ?" He could see her face upturned.

"I'll switch on the light." He went past her into the room. Pauline busied herself with the bed, humming lightly.

"Say, you know the guy in No.-6—the one with the brown suit ? He follows me wherever I go. I wish some one would beat him up."

"Why don't you tell him you don't like him?"

"I have. . . ." She pulled over the coverlet and sat down, swinging her legs slowly backwards and forwards. Under her dress her breasts showed, round, voluptuous, alluring. She seemed to have on no underclothes. Her dark eyes, that hinted of Slavonic ancestry, lingered on his broad back as he repacked his sample case, preparatory to returning it. If her type was new to him, his also was new to her. It seemed incredible that such a fine, handsome boy should not make love to her, should not "try anything on"—unless he had another girl.

"You're funny," she said. "I never see you with a girl. Aren't you lonely?"

"Too busy," said Peter.

"You're a nice boy." She slurred the words slowly.

He sat down on the end of the bed. She moved ever so slightly.

"What's your name?"

"Cochrane."

"No—your other name."

He hesitated. Instinctively he recoiled from a promiscuous use of his Christian name. Yet he was unwilling to hurt her feelings.

"Oh—Jim," he said at last.

"Jim . . . Jimmy. . . ."

Her hand touched his. He was surprised to find how hot it was.

"You're such a gentleman. I saw you raise your hat to Mother Hunt. She's not bad when you know

her. We have jokes together.” She started to tell him one.

Peter stopped her. “ You shouldn’t talk like that.”

“ I can’t help it—I’m made like it.” She leaned towards him suddenly. Her lips were parted, invitingly moist and red.

“ Jimmy ! ”

Peter got up. “ You had better go.”

Pauline rose slowly and walked to the door. She seemed taller, and naked, for all her clothes, like a young savage. She turned.

“ You’ve got a job, haven’t you ? Do you know what you want now ?—a woman.”

CHAPTER IX

"EVERY man a boss," Peter found to be a maxim of Canadian labour—an extension of the "go-getter" system; and until the arrival of the Big Boss the air hummed with little bosses trying to establish some supremacy, however brief.

If, say, four men were engaged in hauling a cable through, they would not be content to work to the commands of the front man.

"Now!" he would shout, as a signal to heave.

"Together!" would cry the second sternly, a moment later.

"Now then!" from the third.

"C'mon, you guys!" the fourth would cry plaintively, and make up for his position by giving a tremendous heave when the others had ended.

So was a fine principle of democracy established, but the cable proceeded in a series of jerks.

Bluff was another maxim—particularly in the electrical trade, which requires specialized knowledge. Many a "screw-driver" electrician kept his job by letting a better man do the difficult work and shouting vociferously when the foreman was near or a nail required to be driven in.

Burton, the man Peter started out with as helper

on his official entry into the Sun Electric, was an example of the bluffer. By ceaseless shouting he had worked himself up into a very fair position, and the fact that every one knew him for what he was seemed to make no difference. He was there : a foreman, and a big, loud-mouthed bladder of wind, perhaps ; but first of all a foreman.

One of the compensations of being allowed to carry the tools around—for after his brilliant beginning with the radio Peter found his job amounted to little more than that—was the number of houses he went into and the interesting people he met.

One of his jobs with Burton was on the freight elevator at the Grain Exchange. At a quarter past eight, when they went in, the floor had not yet been opened, and except for the cleaners scurrying about like so many black beetles, the great central hall was deserted. At one side was a long platform, with innumerable telephone booths at the base of it, and at the back a huge board running the length of the hall where the prices of wheat, barley, and oats were chalked up. Down the middle were the pits where the buying and selling was done.

At ten o'clock the floor was in full operation, and the roar of voices could be heard outside in the street. Peter had never heard such a din.

"If you pal up with one of those gents," said Burton, "they'll make your fortune. You wait and see how many come-round and talk to us."

He was right. About eleven o'clock three men in their shirt sleeves, with ties hanging loose, appeared

on the small balcony outside the sixth floor and mopped the perspiration from their faces. Peter was curious to note how like small boys they were for all their money—and two were reputed to be millionaires ; they fiddled with the electric drill and asked innumerable questions. And also how unlike they were to the tailors' advertisements of Big Business Men—he would have chosen the doorkeeper, a gigantic man with the face of a Master Mind (he did indeed own a car and some small property). Burton seemed to be on excellent terms with them, for he joked and called them by their Christian names.

Before they left one took Peter aside. He was little, fat, and bald headed. His mouth drooped, and he seemed utterly lonely.

"Want to make any money ?" he whispered.

Peter grinned politely. "I do, sir, but I haven't any capital yet."

"Well, save. And when you have fifty dollars come to me and I'll tell you what to buy." He gave his card. "I wish I was you, young man." He clutched Peter's arm and whispered : "Thirty darn rooms. My wife wants 'em. What do I want with thirty rooms ?" He sighed, and trotted back to the uproar.

Peter fingered the card. "Jolly decent of him," he thought. Then : "Poor old chap."

When at noon the next day he knocked off for lunch, he noticed a crowd round the bottom steps of the fire-escape ladder. He went nearer, and a

fragment of conversation came to his ears : “ . . . fell from the top storey—broke his neck.” Peter peered over the heads of the crowd, then drew back with a shocked face. On the ground, terribly injured, was lying his acquaintance of yesterday morning.

“ What—what happened ? ” he asked.

“ Suicide,” said some one briefly.

Over lunch Peter was given to sad philosophizing. To one who could command four meals a day any other reason for suicide seemed inconsiderable. On the dot of one o’clock Peter was commanded to ascend a tall swaying ladder, and so earn his forty cents an hour.

In five days the work on the elevator finished. Peter received on Friday the magnificent sum of fifteen dollars, and returned the two dollars Edwards had lent him. There were two small jobs installing heaters, then he found the words of MacTaggert come true. Morning after morning he would turn up punctually at eight o’clock—the first men there were given any job going—and at ten Edwards would come down from the office. “ Sorry, boys, nothing to-day.”

Peter began to fall behind again with the rent. At first a day—then two days—then a week. Every minute he expected a summons from Mrs. Hunt ; but for some reason she ignored his lapse. Pauline he deliberately avoided. Then one day when he returned home in the afternoon he found her doing his room.

"Got another job yet?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"That's tough." She put down her broom and came nearer. "But you needn't worry. I told Mother Hunt you're a nice boy and she wasn't to bother you. She's my aunt, but no one else here knows it."

Peter flushed. "Then it's you——"

"Yes—it's me." She put her arms round his neck. "Why don't you like me?"

Peter thrust her away. "When I want you to pay my rent I'll tell you!"

"Don't be silly. I haven't paid your rent. I only told Mrs. Hunt——"

Peter went out and slammed the door. To think that he, a man, was indebted to Pauline for the roof over his head!

There was only one thing to be done. He knew that MacTaggert had a double room at the "Y," which he had to share with any one who happened to come in for a night's lodging. Perhaps he would be willing to share with him.

"Sure," said MacTaggert, when Peter broached the subject. "It'll save me having a fresh room-mate every night—and some of the bums that come in have to be smelt to be believed. Two and a half each week—and I guess you'll have to pay in advance. Can you manage it?"

Peter nodded. He returned to Hargreave Street, and dragging his suitcases from under the bed, surveyed his remaining clothes. His second-best suit, a

blue serge. . . . He carried it down to Main Street, argued furiously with Honest Harry, self-styled, and had to accept six dollars for a ten-guinea suit. But it enabled him to pay off Mrs. Hunt, who made no comment of any kind, and move at once into the "Y."

As a matter of course he joined the little circle every evening, sometimes in their room, sometimes Snow's or Loring's, or Young and Stenhouse's : it formed the only social life he had at present ; and he decided that, queer as they all were, in many ways Snow was the queerest of all. His first thought was to borrow something—a quarter if he could ; if not, a dime or even a nickel ; his second to buy a packet of cigarettes. When he had these he would sit on the bed and tell of the rows he had had with the sales manager, Craile.

"I'm gonna have a show-down to-morrow," he would say. "I'll show that guy where he gets off at!"

After a time Peter got into the habit, like the rest, of asking Snow whenever he met him : "Had your show-down with Craile yet, Snow ?"

And Snow's eyes would glitter humorously behind their glasses.

"Say, are you trying to pull my leg ? It ain't elastic."

It grew colder. The first fall of snow came : huge soft flakes that left six inches on the ground in a single night. Married men were chosen for the

important civic business of clearing it away, and throughout the winter they laboured, shovelling it into carts, shovelling it down man-holes, the hardly ceasing snow, which always got the better of them and became a permanent feature of the landscape from October to April. Wheels were taken off and runners put on. Horses jingled through the streets. Motor cars slipped and slithered, their tyres reinforced with steel chains. The god Winter ruled completely.

It grew colder still—the thermometers (many of which were displayed outside shops) fell to ten degrees below zero, then twenty below. Rubbing their ears, shivering, “down-and-outs” huddled into the Free Library, into the Post Office, on to the gratings outside Eaton’s huge department store, where a comforting warmth stole through.

A brilliant sun shone; the sky was brilliant blue. The snow-clad city glittered, every sordidness smoothed out, every street corner a brave show, so white and clean. The children, warmly clothed, loved it. The cold was so healthy that Death held his hand. Only to the hungry did he come, then he laid them out swiftly.

Peter felt vaguely that he was spoiling God’s creation. He was hungry. *Hungry*. The cold braced him, then left him feeling emptier than before. From something beautiful, the whiteness of the streets became hard and merciless. After futile visits to the Sun Electric and the *Free Press*, he prowled from one end of the city to the other, ravenous for something to put in his belly. His young body fought with

his spirit, left both exhausted, then revived and clamoured again for food. He felt his strength going. Once he collapsed on the bed, deathly weak. As a last resort he took his father's watch from the bottom of his suitcase, where it lay wrapped in tissue paper, something sacred. All the oddments of clothing had gone to Main Street, and some, including the suitcase, had been refused at any price, even ten cents. For a long time he weighed the watch in his hands. He licked his lips. Food. He must have it. Thrusting the watch in his pocket he went downstairs.

The man turned it over in his hands.

"Give it me!" said Peter suddenly. He couldn't . . . that Jew mauling it.

Food, cried his body, weakening. He stumbled into the road at a corner. A car turning splashed him from head to foot with pounded snow and slush. He had a swift glimpse of a girl's face, cold and proud; then the car was gone.

Anger blazed up in Peter. She had despised him! Well, he would show her! Wiping the slush from his face with trembling hands, he tramped back to the city and entered the first office building he came to, heedless of what it was. As he marched up the stairs he was conscious that men stared at him queerly. He was past caring. He felt strangely clear-headed. He was going to get work if he had to tear it from them!

Pushing past a startled secretary, he flung open a door with "Manager" on it.

"I want a job!"

Then, as a white blur behind a desk rose and started, "I'm sorry—" he shouted, "Damn you, I've got to have a job!"

A bell pinged. "Call Tom—throw this bum out!"

There was a scuffle—Peter hit out wildly at something well-fed, blue, and unyielding—and he was marched forcibly downstairs and pitched into the street.

"Where you staying?"

"Y.M.C.A." Peter stood by the curb, dull with pain and humiliation, wiping slowly and mechanically at his trousers.

The policeman surveyed him. To take down-and-outs to the station was not his line. Many of them wanted to be taken; but that would cost the citizens money. If they broke windows and so forced their attention on the police, they encountered something more painful than three months' rest behind bars. His eye caught a passing taxi. He shouted "Mike!" and the driver pulled in.

"Take this—" the policeman was about to say "bum," when the fact that Peter was a gentleman revealed itself. He had no use for gentlemen unless they had influence and money, but he substituted grudgingly—"man to the 'Y,' will you?"

The driver glanced at Peter, grunted, "Get in," and the taxi sloshed away, chains banging a wild clatter on the mudguards. "I'm afraid—" began

Peter when they were there. "S'all right," said the driver. He seemed as anxious as the policeman to get rid of an unpleasant responsibility, for, hardly stopping, he whirled round and disappeared.

As Peter dragged himself up the stairs he met MacTaggart's startled face ; he was conscious of the help of his arm ; then he collapsed on the bed.

Mercifully MacTaggart had received twenty dollars from home that afternoon, and was able to get some food sent up. Peter was roused enough to swallow it, then he lay back and slept like the dead.

By the morning he had recovered—it seemed that nothing could beat his body's craving for life—but he felt listless and apathetic. Shame for yesterday he had none. A starving man is not wholly responsible for what he does. But the situation had still to be faced. He accepted two dollars from MacTaggart, determined to pay it back, then from the directory made out a long list of manufacturers—previously he had tried only the electrical firms—and doggedly plodded round. One thing he found better than in England : no introductions were necessary. The heads of business would see any man provided he were presentable enough to pass the doorkeeper. It might be only a minute or two, but they would tell him with their own lips that Winnipeg was dead from the feet up, Saskatoon was worse, Calgary . . . Peter heard it a score of times ; a score of times they took his name and address ; a score of forms he filled in, asking for every possible detail : birthplace, education, the profession of his father.

Ye gods ! the profession of his father to a man who would willingly take a job sweeping the workshop floor !

An amazing assortment of trades he covered, from pipe-fitting to making bedsteads. At the last named he and the manager gazed helplessly at one another, Peter asking just for "a job," the manager sympathetic, but wondering where on earth he could fit him in. He gave him his card to give to a friend of his. And so it went on. At last there remained only one on the list : the Manitoba Power and Pulp. When he arrived there both his ears were frozen—the thermometer had touched thirty below that morning—but he never noticed it till the clerk pointed it out, then he found them puffed up to twice their normal size. The agony while they were thawing out was almost unbearable, and he sat in the outer office grinding his teeth and longing to tear them out of his head.

Three men were before him. By noon a line of a hundred or more stretched down the stairs and out into the street, for a rumour had gone round that two hundred men were required for a new plant being erected at Fort Alexander, on the Winnipeg River.

Peter found his application dwarfed in the general rush. He gave up hope of seeing the manager, and waited on with the rest to get some job, any job, if it were only a navvy's.

For four hours they waited, not daring to move for fear the precious summons should come. Men com-

ing in and out of the office were scanned eagerly . . . then as they went by without a sign there was a murmur of disappointment that ran down into the street, and general apathy settled again. Some of the more faint-hearted moved away, and the men behind shuffled up. Peter stuck it grimly. He came to know that office door by heart ; the frosted glass, the broken M of Manitoba. . . .

At last a man in a mackinaw coat and high-laced lumberjack's boots came out.

"The Super," some one whispered.

Instantly the men stiffened. Hard-faced, hard-eyed, he ran his glance up and down the line, pursing his lips slightly as if he were judging cattle.

"I want sixty men for the rock gang. Ship to-night. Thirty cents an hour."

The glass door banged to.

"Sixty men ! Sixty men !" It went down the line. The ones behind pushed frantically in their desire to be one of the sixty. They surged up the stairs, and Peter was carried off his feet and flung against the glass door. A voice came roaring from within :

"Get back, you ——s, or not a mother's son of you will get work !"

The men were still. They receded from the door and fell again into an orderly line. The taskmaster had cracked his whip.

Peter was about twentieth now. The impact against the door had dazed him, and before he knew what had happened other men had taken his place.

But he ought to be one of the sixty—that was all that mattered : to be one of the sixty.

A clerk came out to take names. At length he paused before Peter and eyed him dubiously.

“ Ever been in the bush before ? ”

“ Yes,” lied Peter boldly. Surely he was not going to fail now.

The clerk grinned. “ So’s your old man ! ” But he took Peter’s name. “ Be at the C.P.R. station at ten-thirty to-night.”

He was about to pass on when Peter became mindful of MacTaggart. “ Can I bring my friend with me ? ”

“ If he can pay his fare : two dollars fifty—yours will be deducted from your first pay.”

Peter thanked him, and, assured of a job at last, though the Rock Gang was what it sounded—physical labour of the hardest kind—he went back to the “ Y.” MacTaggart’s answer, when he asked if he would care to go, was to fling the Gold Seal sample case and order book on the floor.

At ten-thirty they were at the Canadian Pacific station with two small bags—the rest of their belongings they had persuaded the secretary of the “ Y” to store for them—and they left Winnipeg soon after eleven, going north.

All night long the train rumbled along, stopping frequently for other and more important trains to go through. To sleep was impossible. The coaches were packed full of sweating humanity, for more men

had been obtained from private employment agencies, which charged them three dollars for the privilege, and men were even crowded in the lavatories. Many of them were "bohunks" from Central Europe, and as their ideas of hygiene were elementary, the atmosphere was soon unbearable ; yet nobody wanted to open the double windows and let in the bitter cold.

At four in the morning they made Lac du Bonnett, and were turned out to face a thirty below zero cold till the branch line train to Fort Alexander came in. Properly clothed, with mackinaw coats which had high collars that covered the cheeks and ears—the proper wear for the bush—and thick mitts and overshoes, they might have enjoyed it ; for though so cold, the air was dry and invigorating, and there was a wonderful aroma of pine trees.

Behind gleamed whitely the frozen expanse of lake that gave the station its name, and here and there showed a light from the settlement. All around was bush : spruce, tamarack, jack pine—millions of cords waiting to be cut to feed pulp mills and make newsprint. The night was absolutely still. It seemed that even the earth had stopped in that intense cold. From far off a timber wolf wailed ; it was answered by another and another till the air was full of the desolate, inhuman chorus. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped, and there was silence again but for an occasional cracking, sharp as a pistol shot, as a snow-laden branch broke off. Overhead, the black arch of the sky seemed more tremendous, the stars, frozen in their courses, to shine with greater

brilliance than in England. In the north, the aurora borealis flickered fitfully ; pale flames weaving low down on the horizon, like the faint reflection from some dying fire—last motion in this frozen land.

For the first time Peter realized that Canada was beautiful : vast and magnificently beautiful. But it was cold—cold. He and MacTaggert, wearing over-coats with shallow English collars, their gloves thin leather ones, huddled up inside the rough timber shack that did duty for a waiting room and alternately chafed their cheeks and hands, which were in danger of being frozen.

The peasant types seemed little troubled by the cold. With their mackinaws buttoned carelessly and the ear-flaps of their caps hanging loose, they collected in little groups and chattered away happily till it should please some one to order their next movements. A giant Swede came by, gnawing at a hunk of bread. His great red hands were bare, a pair of mitts swinging indifferently from thongs attached to his wrists. He saw MacTaggert gazing enviously at his bread, and tore off a piece.

“ You bane hungry, eh ? ”

“ Thanks,” said MacTaggert gratefully, and halved the piece with Peter.

The Swede gnawed solemnly, like a cow chewing the cud.

“ This joost one dam’ son-of-a-bitch hole, eh ? ”

They nodded agreement, and the Swede beamed. He liked people to understand his English.

“ I not stay long. I make my stake then I go in the

bush. I bane one dam' fine woodsman. Son-of-a-bitch, yes ! I cut one, two, t'ree cords a day ! ”

He finished his bread and passed on, the personification of good nature.

Soon after, the train came in, and every one crowded up. There was a ruction in front. A Galician, finding his progress barred, had used the point of his jack-knife, and the obstruction, a huge German, turned suddenly and gripped his assailant in a bear-like hug. Back and forth they wrestled, grunting furiously. The others looked on stolidly, merely making a move when the wrestlers came too near. Eventually a brakesman came up, rapped both of them on the head with an iron coupling-pin till they parted, then pointed silently to the coaches. They retired, growling like dogs.

Fortunately this train was not so crowded. Peter found an empty space in the coach next to the baggage car, and they pulled out the seats and lay down, luxuriating in the steaming warmth. In two minutes they were asleep.

CHAPTER X

FORT ALEXANDER they reached about ten. As they streamed out of the train and started uphill along a rough road that had been constructed through the bush, they met a steady stream of men carrying bags and bundles coming down. Sometimes one of these would stop and speak to the hopeful new-comers.

"Go back, buddies. The job's no good. They hires you and fires you all in one blasted hour!"

But the new men were eager for work and took little notice. It was the men were no good; never the job was no good.

They breasted the hill and could see now in the valley the broad flow of the river, mottled white with floating ice, and the beginnings of the new plant. These were on a gigantic scale. A broad band of white, stretching from shore to shore, was the concrete dam and spillway, already completed; and in the centre a dense skeleton of red-painted girders marked the power-house. On the near shore was the beginning of another skeleton, even larger, that would be the pulp and paper mill, capable of turning out millions of miles of newsprint every year. All down the sides of the road were bags of concrete, stacks.

of lumber, huge castings waiting to be hauled ; here a water-wheel, like a gigantic mushroom, weighing fifty tons ; there a girder strapped down on wooden runners, that would take a team of twenty horses to pull. In the clear air they could hear the shouts of the foremen and the staccato clatter of pneumatic riveters. There was a clean, heady smell of new lumber.

Peter's heart lifted. All the engineer—the creative spirit in him—was roused. The harnessing of half a million horse-power ! That was achievement. The privation and degradation he had suffered he thrust from him. It was worth while to endure hardship, to sweat and toil behind the great lumbering car of labour. Perhaps in time he would help to direct that car ! . . . His eyes glowed.

Impulsively he turned to MacTaggert.

“ Isn't it great, Mac ? ”

“ Yeah,” said MacTaggert. He blew through his empty pipe. “ I wonder where they sell baccy ? ”

The Time Office was the first of a little town of wooden buildings that formed the bunkhouses and cookhouses for the host of foremen, riggers, and labourers. It was erected as a permanent structure, as were the others, with windows and doors properly fitted and painted ; for it would be two years before the mill and power-house were in full operation—and then they would be using only a third of the available water-power.

A crowd of men were outside waiting to sign on.

As the day superintendent, Crowther, came out, a short, thick-necked bull of a man, with a voice that would carry above any drill ever invented, the "bohunks" milled round him and almost knelt at his feet.

"Give me job, meester, give me job. I work for less—twenty-five cent, meester!"

They were like animals. So Crowther evidently thought, for he kicked them unceremoniously out of the way with his heavy boots and strode on in a furious temper.

"God help British labour in this country," drawled a man in Peter's ear.

The window of the Time Office rattled up and the timekeeper appeared.

"Fall in line!" he shouted.

Gradually the men obeyed, and then followed a slow march past the pigeon-hole to get time-checks and badges.

At last Peter's turn came. Name? Nationality? Age? Relatives to be notified if hurt? (An ominous sound to that.) He answered clearly, took his badge—a white metal disc with Manitoba Power and Pulp Co. round the edge and a number in the centre—which he was supposed to wear pinned to his cap, and a brass check with the same on it; and after waiting for MacTaggert, followed the crowd to the bunkhouses.

These were long, low structures with a row of iron-framed bunks, upper and lower, after the manner of a ship, down each side, and a big stove at the end.

Each bunk was provided with a spring mattress, a pillow, and two blankets, which, with the stove burning, were sufficient for the coldest night. The lower girders of the roof served as drying grids for clothes, and a man entering had to thread his way through festoons of socks, trousers, mackinaws, and underwear ; each of which added its quota to the general atmosphere. But Peter was not hypercritical now. The beds looked good, and he welcomed one of them as a home.

At seven o'clock a composite meal was served : supper for the day shift coming off and breakfast for the graveyard, or night, shift going on. For every three bunkhouses there was a cookhouse—the same type of building, with long tables down the length of it and a kitchen at the end ; and all brilliantly lighted, for power, of course, cost practically nothing. On the stroke of the hour a " cookee " jangled an iron bar in a triangle, making a hideous clangour, and the first man was in before the noise ceased.

The food was excellent. Great plates of stew, boiled beef and pressed beef, bacon and eggs, canned peaches and pears, as much as the men could eat, with jugs of tea and coffee to wash it down. The company, or its chief servants, might treat men like animals, but with the tradition of Western hospitality still strong in the land they were going to see they were well fed. It was the best meal Peter had eaten for weeks, and he did full justice to it, standing up and grabbing right and left like his neighbours, for no one was expected to pass anything. The one con-

cession made to polite society was that every one removed their caps—or if they didn't, the cookees did for them.

At last even the most ravenous were satisfied, and leaving a ghastly mess to be cleared up, they all went outside for a smoke. Never, thought Peter, had tobacco tasted so good. All too soon the five-to-eight whistle blew, and he went on for his first shift.

The Rock Gang, he soon found, amply justified its name. A vast space was being excavated for the foundations of the mill ; and in the great pit, twenty feet deep, lighted by floodlights to the brightness of day, laboured a hundred men or more, hacking out the earth frozen hard as rock, and loading it into wagons. Viewed from above, with the blackness of bush around, the scene was startling, bizarre, like hell going full blast in a quiet corner of heaven. Activity was ceaseless. Teams thundered down one slope into the brilliant glare, and toiled, laden, up another. Picks rang. Shovels rasped. Foremen shouted. Great lumps of rock, prised loose by blasting, went crashing into the carts. Teamsters cried to their horses in strange words and strange languages, and the straining beasts started suddenly with the noise of a collision. On the sides of the pit small fires burned redly outside shacks where the blunted tools were sharpened and retempered. The virgin land was stubborn to the last small stone. So was Industry born, with birth pangs agonized as those of a woman.

The amount of intelligence required for Peter's job

was small. He was given a pick and shovel and told to hack along a line. That was all. But the ground was so hard that chips flew from the pick like so many splinters of glass, and the foremen kept the men working at top speed. Once every hour a bucket of water, ice-cold, was brought round.

Peter had always been proud of his strength ; but hunger had sapped it. He couldn't get much force into his blows ; couldn't, for long, direct the pick with any enthusiasm. He envied a foreigner in front of him, a huge fellow, swinging with the monotony of a machine, Crash ! Crash ! rock raining around him. By eleven o'clock Peter had blisters on both hands, his shoulders ached, and despite the cold he was drenched in perspiration. MacTaggart was the same way. Their efforts grew feeble. Peter wondered if he could possibly last out till midnight when they had an hour for dinner. And he knew, even while the pick slipped about in his hands and he staggered rather than walked, that he would last out. The foreman came up behind and watched silently for some time.

"Never done this before, eh ?" he said at last.

"No," admitted Peter, then realizing that to be fired after only three hours' work would be disastrous, added quickly : "I'll soon get used to it."

"I'll set you two dumping."

And in view of what happened later this should be explained. The material excavated from the pit was used in making roads. Peter was required to stand near the end with a lighted lantern, and when the

carts rumbled up shout "Dump!" at the exact spot he wanted the next load. The teamster then pulled a lever, releasing the bottom of the wagon, and deposited a mountainous pile of earth and rocks which it was Peter's duty to straighten out into something approaching flatness. At first he thought it easy ; that he could make a good road and have a pleasant rest between wagons. But it did not work out that way. Some of the teamsters were half asleep and would not dump till they had gone another fifty yards or so ; others, out of sheer spite, it seemed, deposited their load in the most inconvenient place possible, and Peter had to work at furious speed to get it cleared up before the next one came.

After three days of this he was bitterly disillusioned. There was no question of promotion however well he worked. The company were not interested in promoting men. As well might a cog in a clock mechanism aspire to be the main-spring. All he could hope for was to save some money.

But he was fortunate in being on the night shift. The day superintendent had a dreadful name. Sometimes he would fire fifty men in a morning, before they had done an hour's work ; then they actually owed the company money for their fare and the doctor, for they were debited a dollar for the latter when they signed on, and it was not returned whether they required him or not. A constant procession tramped smooth the long trail through the bush to the station.

"It's infernal slavery," said MacTaggert, after a particularly hard night. "I shan't stick it much longer." He surveyed his torn hands.

"We'll have to, Mac," said Peter, "we've only made about twelve dollars between us."

MacTaggert made no reply. But when the five-to-eight whistle went that night, blaring through the camp and for miles beyond, ignored only by the lazily cracking river, he merely settled down in his bunk. "I'm not going on."

"You mean you want to quit?"

MacTaggert nodded. "I'd sooner starve with the Gold Sealers in Winnipeg than slave my guts out in this God-forsaken spot."

"Then you'll be a dam' fool," said a lazy voice, and Peter turned to look at an "old timer" smoking in his bunk. "Spring's the time to quit, not now. You wan't to do what I do—just enough work to keep going through the winter."

"They'll fire you if you take time off," said Peter.

"They won't fire me," said the old man comfortably. "I'm a blaster. If they want to blow the — place sky high themselves, let them."

"Well—I'm going to sleep." And MacTaggert snuggled down.

Peter silently laced his boots. *He wasn't going to quit.* MacTaggert's defection had somehow set him on fire with ambition again. He would work his hands off. Damn it, wouldn't they see then—give him a real job?

He went on shift, and as luck would have it, everything seemed to go wrong. The foreman criticized his frantic efforts at road-making, and hinted that firing was in the offing ; and the teamsters seemed to dump just as the fancy took them. There was an Irish-Canadian named O'Donnell, who would bring his team on to the dump like a battery going into action, and leave a long straggling line of rocks that took Peter hours to clear up.

It was one of these unsightly dumps that the foreman took exception to:

" You must do better than that."

Peter wiped his sweating face. " I can't help it if one of the teamsters won't dump as I tell him to."

The foreman shrugged. " That's your look-out. You should be man enough to make him."

" All right," said Peter.

The next time he saw O'Donnell coming he took up his stand in the most inconvenient place for dumping possible. His lantern he left some distance away. The trap worked. As he thought, O'Donnell steered away from the lantern and came clattering past Peter. Just as he was about to pull the lever, Peter appeared out of the darkness, jumped on the wagon, and caught him by the coat.

" Come down here. I want to talk to you."

O'Donnell lurched over and dealt him a swinging blow on the side of the head. It was what Peter needed to rouse his temper thoroughly. He pulled

with all his strength, and the teamster came toppling down off the wagon.

"My horses!" he gasped.

"Damn your horses!" Peter gripped him by the throat, and with a ferocity that surprised himself, shook him violently to and fro. "Now will you dump when I tell you?"

"What's all this?"

It was the night superintendent who had come up unobserved. He was a fussy, irritable little man—a totally different type from the bull-like Crowther.

"Two men fighting! Get up! Get up at once and explain yourselves!"

Peter let go, and O'Donnell got sullenly to his feet.

"He pulled me down off the wagon, sir, for no reason at all."

"You wouldn't dump when I told you," said Peter hotly.

"Silence, both of you!" The superintendent lifted his voice. "Mr. Mardy! Mr. Mardy!"

"Coming, sir!" shouted the foreman. He came running up. "What's the trouble?"

"Two men fighting. I won't have men fight when I'm in charge. Fire both of them!" And the superintendent walked away in a great rage, without the explanation he had insisted on.

"I'm sorry for you, Mac," grinned O'Donnell, "but I'll get taken on again next week—they can't do without teamsters."

Peter looked round for the foreman, but with a

murmur which might have been "Hard luck, lad," he also had slipped away. Peter turned to the cause of the trouble. "I'll have my money's worth then," he said, and rushed at O'Donnel, intending to batter him out of existence. The teamster scrambled on to his wagon and lashed at Peter with the whip. Peter got hold of him properly, yanked him off, and proceeded scientifically to strangle him. Two bulging eyes glared helplessly at him. Then suddenly he relaxed his grip. It wasn't worth it. He got off O'Donnel and walked away. The teamster would certainly dump now when he was told—but it was too late.

They left next day at noon. Sixteen dollars their combined cheques came to after deductions for board—a dollar a day—and the doctor, whom Peter had never seen. But chits were given them for their fare back to Winnipeg.

They pulled down their caps over their ears—it was bitterly, blasting cold, and they had to face the wind—and started for the station. As they went down the hill they met a long line of men coming up. One of them stopped.

"What's the job like?"

"Bloody," said MacTaggert tersely. "You might as well go back now."

But the man only grinned and shouldered again his bundle. It was the men were no good; never the job was no good.

In the train, as they jogged along between snow-

powdered trees back to civilization, Peter felt utterly depressed.

"Anyway," he said, "I'm glad I went for that swine O'Donnell."

MacTaggert blew through his empty pipe. It seemed a fitting epitaph for the whole proceeding.

CHAPTER XI

BACK in Winnipeg again, Peter, exposing his ears for a moment, promptly had the tips frozen. It was twenty-eight below.

"The 'Y' is too expensive," said MacTaggert; "we can't afford five dollars yet. Where is it you used to stay?"

"In Hargreave Street."

"We'll try there then. Maybe we can get a room for four."

Peter made no mention of Pauline. He felt too tired to bother with her. Perhaps she would transfer her attentions to MacTaggert.

They secured a double room right at the very top for three and a half dollars, and straightway moved in. "We'll do our own cooking on the gas ring," said MacTaggert, "till one or other of us gets a job. It won't cost so much."

Peter, as treasurer of the partnership, hoped that it wouldn't.

Immediately after breakfast next morning he set out for the Sun Electric, while MacTaggert went to interview a firm of tyre wholesalers who had advertised for a packer—for that matter they might have asked just for a man, for scores of applicants, ranging

from an unemployed accountant to a "bohunk" sent by a private agency (after receiving their three dollars) donned overalls for the occasion and called themselves expert packers. It was MacTaggert's joy that his cast-of countenance would let him appear an expert almost anything, from a bank manager to a builder's labourer. Any way, the Jew manager thought him the most expert of the applicants, and gave him the job : fifteen dollars a week and overtime.

Peter, returning from the Sun Electric, found him in their room talking to Pauline. He congratulated him warmly on the job, and tried hard to appear enthusiastic, but he was conscious that his voice sounded a little strained. Edwards, at the Sun Electric, had held out no hope at all. Never, he said, had business been so bad. But they would send for him when they could.

"I'll get some canned pears to celebrate," said MacTaggert, and left Peter alone with Pauline. He was aware of a tremendous change in her. She had always been well dressed, but now she might have been the daughter of a millionaire. Two hundred dollars would not have paid for the fur coat she was wearing, and a simple little cloche hat was chosen with absolute disregard for expense. Hard work had kept her figure perfect and skin pure. Pretty would be an inadequate word to describe her : she was dazzling—beautiful.

She smiled at Peter. "Do you think I look nice?"

"I certainly do. Have you come into a fortune?"

"I may be getting married in the spring."

"I'm glad." He offered to shake hands, but she came forward and put her arms round his neck. Her perfume flooded his senses.

"I like you much better."

"Good Lord!" said Peter. He was staggered. "You mustn't talk like that when you're going to be married."

She shrugged. "I can't help it. I don't love him. He's too old. Why don't you kiss me?"

She pushed him down on the bed and sat on his knee. "Don't you like me?"

"Of course I like you . . ." Footsteps sounded outside, and MacTaggert came in.

Pauline got up. "Well, so-long, boys. Be good."

"She seems struck on you," said MacTaggert when she had gone.

"Too struck—and she's going to be married!"

MacTaggert opened the can of pears. "When you came out," he said casually, "you were as green as grass. But you won't stay like that. You can't in this country. Things are thrown at you. There's none of the shams and deceits and guards there are in England. You have got to live completely or be a hermit. If she wanted me I should have her."

"I don't like that, Mac," said Peter shortly; "you seem to have had every girl under the sun."

MacTaggert smiled. "I've had a whale of a time. If I never kiss another girl, I can comfort myself that I've had my share." He emptied out the pears in a

luscious, gurgling stream. "Well, well, I'm only thirty-five. Let's eat."

Peter manoeuvred the pork and beans clumsily. He was thinking of the tenets of his upbringing : work, marriage, children, then more work to a triumphant conclusion. This country was denying him the honour of work, but apparently he could have any number of girls to love, quite free, with no obligation after. And he had strong passions—and imagination. He thought of her perfume. . . . His face set. "Tell me about the job, Mac," he said abruptly.

"It's with a Jew on Portage Avenue—chap named Goldberg. He does a mail order business ; sends his catalogue round to every little farmer for miles around, and ships out the tyres C.O.D. He gets rid of a lot of inferior stuff that way ; then when complaints get too hot, he will close up and start elsewhere under another name. But that's not my business ; I'm a packer. Apron. Brawny arms. I start to-morrow at eight."

"I wish I had something," said Peter.

"Sun Electric no good, eh ?"

"Not a thing."

"Well, I wish I had Pauline, but she won't look at me." He sighed. "When I think of all the pretty ladies I used to know. . . ."

"You're an old wreck, Mac !"

MacTaggert smiled.

All that week Peter went without a spark of good

fortune—even that apostle of “go-getting,” Burton, was laid off—and every afternoon when he returned Pauline was waiting for him in his room. She sapped his resistance. She was starving for him. The climax came when she threw herself in his arms one black day when he was sitting by the window, drearily watching the people below.

“ You do love me a little, don’t you, honey ? ”

Peter said nothing. He got up suddenly from his chair, and picking her up with him, carried her over to the bed and almost flung her down. Her arms went round his neck, and her lips, moist and hot, sought his.

He kissed her twice, then pushed her away and stared moodily at the floor.

She stirred restlessly. “ Oh, you Englishmen are cold. Don’t you have love in England ? ”

Still Peter said nothing. He got up and roamed round the room. Pauline watched him with sullen eyes. “ I hate you,” she burst out. “ I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last man in the world.” She started crying. “ I’m so unhappy. I could go out in the street and pick up the first man I see.”

She rolled over on the bed and sobbed. Peter watched her uncomfortably, unable to tear himself away, to go downstairs and settle the thing once for all. He felt starved for everything; and here was Pauline offering him something. It was too much to expect. . . .

She sobbed on. He went over to the bed, stretched out a hand in compassion. She nestled against him

with the instinctive desire of an animal, regarding sex not as a question of laws, to be attained after a clergyman had said some words, a house had been built, but something quite natural and open, yes, like the normal want of food or sleep.

For a time they stayed quiet, then Pauline came closer. Peter took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Oh, Jim!"

Her bare arms went round his neck, nearly choking him. Then he forgot everything but the slim, deliciously yielding form in his arms.

CHAPTER XII

"HALLO-EE."

MacTaggert walked into the room and took off his mackinaw.

"Had any luck to-day?"

Peter turned his eyes from the window.

"None."

"That's tough." MacTaggert stripped off his working shirt and began to fill his pipe.

"I'm working overtime to-night. We'll be busy as hell to the end of the month, then maybe I'll get laid off. Come on, let's go out and eat."

Peter shook his head. "I can't let you pay any longer for my meals, Mac. I feel I'll never be able to repay you. I shan't make another penny in this country."

"You will when you get a job. It's wonderful how different you feel when you're working. I feel like a king."

"I could chuck myself in the river."

"That's fine—but do it when you've had something to eat."

Peter turned to the window. "I'm not coming—you go, Mac."

MacTaggart opened the door. "Well—so long."

Peter heard his footsteps descending the stairs, then silence. The faint odour of his tobacco still remained ; it seemed to speak of manliness, efficiency, the glory of bustling through the world with work to do. Peter leaned forward, his head in his hands. Constant underfeeding had made him thin and irritable. He turned longing eyes on the door. Mac would be eating now : ham and eggs and toast and tea. . . .

The door opened and MacTaggart came in with a packet of cigarettes.

"Have a smoke, then come out and eat—and hurry up, because I've got to get back."

"I've told you I'm not coming." Pride and obstinacy drove Peter to the window again.

MacTaggart put his hand on his shoulder. "Come along, you'll feel better when you've eaten."

Peter flung away the hand. "Get out, Mac !" he said violently.

"All right, but I shall only come in again. We're just wasting time."

Abruptly Peter's anger died down. He lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "You're a good chap, Mac," he said shakily. "I shan't forget."

"That's fine. And now let's go before we meet Snow and he tries to borrow a quarter."

They had the thirty-cent "special"—that was the height of indulgence now—then MacTaggart hurried back to work.

Peter strolled along to the "Y," comforted by the

meal and a cigarette. With a shock he realized just how peaceful his frame of mind was. Two months ago he would have been horrified at his position, but now he was satisfied to have his stomach filled, something to smoke, and another meal in prospect somewhere.

"I must buck up," he told himself, "or I shall get like Snow. I'll try Gold Sealing again to-morrow—I might sell a pair."

However, in the morning there was something else. A phone message came for him from the Sun Electric. It was Pauline who called him to the phone, and out of delicacy he avoided her eyes, feeling that she would be embarrassed at meeting him so soon after. But he was wrong. She showed no embarrassment whatsoever ; neither did she show any affection. Peter marvelled at the change of mood. He could hardly believe that only yesterday her arms had been round him in passionate embrace. She was quite cool and casual.

"Phone for you, Jimmy. I believe it's a job."

She marched before him with a broom.

"I hope so," said Peter.

Pauline nodded. "It does make you feel good to work sometimes."

Peter answered his call. They required him to help wire a house for lighting. Start at once. Thirty cents an hour. "Thank God for that," he muttered.

When he went back to his room Pauline was sweeping vigorously in the passage.

"It was a job," he said.

"I'm glad for you, honey." She was about to go on sweeping when he stopped her. He put his arms round her and kissed her.

"You are a funny boy." She put her hair straight.
"Do you feel like that now?"

"No, but—" How was he to put into words what he felt : that he couldn't kiss, give himself as he had done, and feel nothing after ; no real love ?

She put down her broom and touched his hair. "I wanted to do that."

"Pauline—will you marry me ?"

"I can't, honey—I've told you about my boy." She stroked his fair hair and whispered in his ear : "Sometimes you can come to my room. . . ."

Peter tore himself away and went to rake out his overalls. Thank God he had some work to do. Love on the go-getting scale ! What did Pauline think he was ? It wasn't altogether just an honourable offer he had made her. He had let himself go ; he had loved.

"I'm a fool !" he told himself savagely.

The job lasted three days ; then came another break. A week's wait and another job, this time installing electric water-heaters. The most he earned in a week was fifteen dollars. Christmas was near, and that acted as a brake as far as the electrical trade was concerned. People wanted their money to spend on presents.

Christmas came nearer still ; was ushered in with terrific pomp and glitter by the stores. The sordid

mechanics of existence faded into the background. Nearly every one had presents from home, and the "bum's parlour," as the rotunda of the "Y" was known, took on quite a gay atmosphere with holly and coloured chains.

MacTaggart had a hundred dollars sent out ; Peter a small postal order from Aunt Janet, which he valued for the thought behind it. There was a perfect spate of wealth and good humour. Fraser appeared in spats and an overcoat of startling check design. Snow had his hair cut and his suit pressed, and redoubled his efforts to borrow quarters, changing his demands as the Day grew nearer to fifty cents and then dollars. For once he forgot about a show-down with Craile, and was seen in Portage Avenue smoking a large cigar—a gift from the sales manager. As for Young and Stenhouse, a good week's work on Young's part selling magazines—he had sold one ten years' subscription (money in advance) for a magazine not likely to last two—made them comparatively affluent ; and Stenhouse, rubbing his hands, modestly laid claim to selling two Gospels, St. Mark and St. Luke, to an old lady whom he caught looking in the window of his little shop. Even Loring had received, as an Encouragement Bonus, ten dollars from the greeting-card verse company—and a note saying that, with steady application, he might yet become one of their most distinguished poets ! Loring's vocabulary had been somewhat exhausted by the time Peter heard about it ; but the ten dollars was undeniably useful.

As Peter walked down Portage Avenue on Christmas Eve and gazed at the vigorous, pushing multitudes thronging in and out of the stores, at the blaze of colour in the windows, at the familiar tall towers studded with lights, like a fair in the sky, on top of the *Free Press* Building, he was conscious of a rush of affection for Winnipeg. It might be flamboyant, hard ; but there was nothing mean about it. It was like a raw youth : crude, boisterous in the realization of growing strength and power ; but eminently good-hearted at bottom.

The Day arrived. In the morning Peter, MacTaggart, and about a dozen others went to a service in a Pentecostal Mission, the "Holy Rollers," colloquially ; and there the Kingdom of Heaven was stormed, "go-getting" applied to religion. Peter managed to maintain an attitude of detachment through the exhortations, but struck definitely at joining the scramble up to the penitents' benches.

Young, who was cheerfully bawling "Alleluiah," said : "Well, come downstairs. You must see that."

They passed out of a side door and down some steps into a stone crypt. Here about a score of people, men and women, were sitting or lying about the floor, waiting, Young told Peter, for the spirit to move them. They groaned and muttered ; some of the noises were so strange that Peter nearly laughed. "Look at him," said Young, and pointed to an old man swaying to and fro on his knees. Suddenly he leapt up. "I've found Him ! I've found Him !"

Back and forth he rushed, tripping over others, and finally lay down exhausted.

"Let's go." Peter had seen enough. Then his eye fell on a girl in a corner. Something about her was familiar. It was Doris Mather! She saw him and came over. She was stouter than he remembered, heavily made up, and she wore a black hat and a veil with patches over her eyes.

"Well, Mr. Cochrane. You didn't expect to see me here?"

"No," said Peter, shaking hands.

She glanced over her shoulder. "George! . . . This is George." And Peter saw a middle-aged man with a face like a wooden image.

"How are you getting on?" he asked Doris.

"Oh, George isn't such a bad old stick, are you, George?"

The mouth of the image moved slightly; and Peter was left to gather what he could.

"Well, we got to be getting on. We've an apartment on McCall Street. I suppose you're a big bug now, aren't you, Mr. Cochrane?"

"Not exactly," admitted Peter.

"You look it. . . . You've got a look about you. All right, I'm coming, George,"—though the wooden image had not moved a muscle.

"Well, good-bye. Merry Christmas!" She shook hands; her scent deluged him; her eyes sought his; and she was gone. George walked by her side. Peter, looking after them, saw Doris talking hard; she seemed to be explaining how she had met

him. As far as he could see, George took not the slightest notice.

Peter was less censorious than he used to be ; he merely wondered how she had happened to meet George.

That afternoon he attended a service at the "Y." The preacher gave a short, manly sermon. "Some of you fellows may be pretty near desperate," he said directly. "But God does not forget. . . . Trust in Him. . . ."

Peter, sitting between Snow and MacTaggert, sensed the reaction to the sermon : polite immobility on the part of MacTaggert ; half-humorous resignation in Snow. But every one listened. After the sermon the preacher came among them. As he paused before Peter, Peter felt young, clean, upstanding again. He looked straight into the preacher's eyes and was given a strong hand-clasp.

"This country wants you."

They sat round the fire after. Nobody seemed ready to talk. Then Fraser began about England. Good old England ! Dear old England ! What jollifications there would be in London now ! Cigars were lit ; they spread the ennobling influence which makes a cigar, even a very cheap one, worth many times the price. Peter, drawing at his and tasting the slightly bitter leaf, allowed a kindly tolerance to flow over his mind. Pauline. He wouldn't see her again. No. And he would make a real effort to get a good job. . . .

At six o'clock a Christmas dinner was provided. They ate themselves to a standstill. Cigarette in mouth, Snow drew a paper cap on his head. They returned to children as nearly as they could. And so Christmas passed.

The next three months were a breathing space. Peter worked on an average four days out of six at the Sun Electric, becoming a really competent tradesman ; and the balance of his time he spent at the Free Library, reading to keep up his technical knowledge. He was returning home one afternoon when a taxi came crashing along the rutted street, splashing melted snow with a complete disregard of who might be on the sidewalk. In trying to avoid it, a girl in front of Peter slipped and fell. He ran to help her.

"Are you hurt ?"

"Just my ankle. I twisted it a bit. It will be all right in a minute." She smiled at him.

She was about a head shorter, and dressed in brown from the close-fitting hat which was fashionable then to her overshoes, which are forced on girls in Canada by the climate, and can be so ugly or so dainty according to the ankles of the wearer. These, Peter noticed, were dainty.

"I should like to hit that driver !" he exclaimed ; and indeed, if he had seen the taximan then, he would have smacked him across the face and then engaged in battle according to the best traditions of chivalry.

"I'm afraid it was my fault. I was day-dreaming."

She smiled again. There was a friendliness and charm about her, and the warmth and feeling in her brown eyes contrasted favourably with the hard stare of so many girls in Winnipeg. It seemed years since he had met a girl like this.

"My ankle *does* hurt a bit," she said.

"Take my arm," commanded Peter; and for the space of three blocks she did so; then the ankle being definitely better she thanked him. What happened after was due to no definite calculation. Peter had never spoken to a strange girl in the street before; he supposed that it would be a rather sordid process of sidelong glances and nervous remarks. There was nothing of that. Quite naturally he offered to accompany her home; and just as naturally she accepted. Her name, she told him, was Aileen Morrow, and she lived in an apartment with her sister, Ruth, her parents being dead. She earned her living as a private secretary.

"It must be hard work," said Peter. He held quixotic and rather old-fashioned ideas on women, and thought they plodded, gasping painfully, along the thorny road of Big Business until they attained their natural *métier*—a home of their own.

Aileen laughed.

"Why should it be? I love it. Mr. Cantrell, my chief, is a dear, and just like a child in some ways. The other day he wanted to attend a conference in his office coat—and would have, too, if I hadn't made him put the other on. . . . You're new to Canada?" she asked suddenly.

"How can you tell?"

"Oh, a dozen little ways. An Englishman always tells you his name so solemnly, as if it were a deadly secret. But tell me how you like Winnipeg. I think you're dying to talk to some one."

Peter was, although he had not realized it quite so definitely. He had no social life in the usual sense of the term, and had nearly forgotten that he had ever been to parties and dances, even the cinema. The usual avenues of introduction in Canada, the Churches, made no appeal to him. It was done too much on the community principle, and he was too reserved for that. Instead of introducing one to a few families, which would have been very pleasant, young people's meetings were held after the service and arrangements made on a wholesale scale for snow-shoe parties and bowling clubs. Peter had watched some of these parties starting out in the evening, girls and boys in gaily coloured woollen caps tramping along the snow on their rackets, electric torches flashing—and been envious. But he couldn't possibly afford snow-shoes and proper clothes. So he walked alone, or with MacTaggert. Pauline had disappeared soon after Christmas: he presumed with the wealthy boy-friend. She left a gap, which increased with the days. Pagan she certainly was, perhaps soulless; but not sordid or common. Commonness implies something cheap; and Pauline was too open in her desires to be that. You either liked her or let her alone. She had been friendly and affectionate towards him. She had done his room well, which with a girl who

knew the quickest and most slap-dash way to do everything meant a lot. The new girl was silent, slatternly ; a paid domestic. Pauline was beginning to live after she had gone. The door she had unlocked, the greatest mystery in life, could only stay uneasily on the latch. He had wished sometimes that he hadn't been so impulsive ; that he had loved her more. . . . Now, for the moment, all that was forgotten. He could talk with a charming girl.

"But you've had rather a hard time ?" she asked, when he had given a general impression of Winnipeg, but touching very lightly on his work and not at all on Gold Seal Hosiery and Fort Alexander.

"Why—?" he began.

"Never ask a girl why. The answer is always Intuition—it's a heaven-sent weapon to subdue men with. But you have, haven't you ?"

Peter grinned. Miss Morrow glanced at him sideways and noted that he had excellent teeth. She liked that. So many English people had bad ones. She knew an English girl who had dreadful teeth, black and decayed, and her parents didn't seem to care much.

"No," he said, "but I don't seem to get on very fast."

"You will. It's just a question of time. We've got a boy at the office who was out here a year before he got a job at all—but then he had parents to support him."

"That sounds more cheerful."

"I mean it to be." Aileen laid her hand on his

arm—he thought after that they might have known each other for years. “Just don’t give in. And here we are at Monmouth Avenue; and thank you, sir, for a very pleasant journey.”

She offered her hand, and Peter took it, feeling suddenly stiff and awkward. He cleared his throat. “I—can I see you again? There’s a good show on at the Dominion this week” (he had not the slightest idea what was on); “would you care to go on Thursday?”

Aileen smiled. “I’d love to—on one condition: that you take me in the ‘gods.’ ”

“Eight o’clock then?”

“Eight o’clock.”

“Good-bye.” Out of sheer cordiality, now that the nerve-racking business of getting to know her was over, Peter took her hand again and squeezed it with all his strength.

“Good-bye.” Aileen gently caressed her crushed fingers.

For a long time after she had gone in he remained staring hard at a tree, then suddenly he swung round and strode blithely back to Hargreave Street. What a wonderful and unexpected business life was! That friendliness . . . and she was so—so “gallant” was the word he wanted.

CHAPTER XIII

WINNIPEG was full of theatres, built in an access of optimism when the population was nearing the quarter-million mark. Most of them had since been converted into cinemas, or closed up, but the Dominion still remained—a vast barn-like structure with acres of seats which banged resonantly, and a gigantic gilded candelabrum suspended from the dome, which managed to draw eyes away from the drab bareness of the walls.

"Now mind," said Aileen warningly, at the entrance, "we go in the gallery or I shall walk straight home—and I never break my word!"

And once in her seat, incredibly high above the stage, she leaned forward ecstatically like an excited child.

"It isn't every day I get taken to the theatre."

Peter glowed foolishly.

All through the play, an undistinguished melodrama (he felt called upon to explain lamely that he had mistaken the name), he felt her ready sympathy. When the heroine came forward with drooping head : "I've tried, but I'm beaten—I'm beaten," he heard a little sound beside him. Aileen's eyes were luminous with tears. And when the villain clasped

the heroine in his arms and she struggled frantically, he felt her stiffen indignantly. "Oh, I could sock him one!" It reminded him of a tale he had heard of a theatre out West in the old days : how when the heroine, struggling in the arms of the villain, had cried, "Save me! Save me!" a cowboy in the audience had promptly produced his six-shooter and fired three crashing shots. "I'm coming, ma'am, I'll fix the swine!" And "fixed the swine" he had—to the extent of a broken elbow.

At last, when the curtain had fallen, Aileen turned with a long sigh.

"It's been wonderful, Peter. . . . Yes, I know it's unreal, and there were times when I wanted to laugh at the serious parts ; but it's life as it should be : happiness to the ones who deserve it."

"Like a coffee?" said Peter gruffly. He had a wild feeling that he would like to take Aileen in his arms and never let her go.

"Yes, but we'll go back to my apartment for it. It isn't so terribly late yet, and I want you to meet Ruth."

The living room of Aileen's apartment reflected the character of its owner. It was cool and white and feminine, with vivid touches of colour here and there in what he noticed as "cushions and things," some absurd kewpie-dolls on the mantelpiece, and a careless profusion of books and magazines.

"Do you like my apartment?" asked Aileen directly. Fully a head shorter than Peter, she looked

up at him with laughing eyes, and waved her hand round with the air of a showman. On the walls were exquisite etchings of Canadian winter scenes, and two signed originals of old houses in Coventry—reckless extravagance, she told him frankly ; but she felt she must have them. For she had a veneration for things English and the English tradition, and yet —surprising to Peter—no particular love for Englishmen as individuals. A chance remark of Peter's proved this. As he bent forward to examine the etchings, he said :

“ I expected Canada to be different from what it is.”

“ How ? ” asked Aileen.

“ Well, it’s born out of England, so to speak, isn’t it ? I should have thought it would have been more English in tone. I feel like a foreigner.”

Aileen bustled about the tiny kitchen making coffee. The reply came through the door :

“ Well, you are in a way. We’ve changed a lot since Colonial days, though Englishmen who come out seem to think of us still as Colonials. We’re a nation ! ”

“ I see,” said Peter gravely, “ but American in tone.”

“ They’re nearer to us than England. And they deluge our news-stands and movies with propaganda, and invest in our industries. Why, until the English boy at the office told me it was made in England, I thought the Rolls-Royce was a high-priced American car, like the Packard. It is English, isn’t it ? ”

“ Yes,” said Peter gravely. “ And it’s the best car in the world—it’ll last for ever.”

"Last for ever ! Who wants a car to last for ever ? No woman does. When I get grey hairs, do I want to be reminded of a misspent youth ? No, give me the American car. It looks well ; it runs well ; and you can turn it in next year and buy a new one."

"It strikes me," said Peter, in a burst of candour, "that you're altogether American now. One of these days, when some President gets the Empire-building complex, they'll come along and annex you."

Aileen shook her head. "They'll never annex us. For one thing, they don't want to—we're one of their best customers ; and for another, we wouldn't stand it. And whom do you think we should turn to if we wanted help : England. There's loyalty to the English tradition for you. We—oh, here's Ruth. Ruth, I've been expounding the gospel of the Canadian : Chapter One—what he is. Let me introduce the boy-friend." To Peter : "You're the boy-friend ; it's the insult you get for taking me to the theatre. . . . You're tired, honey." Her light manner suddenly vanished, and running to her sister she helped her off with her coat. "Where have you been to-night ?"

"Oh—just a dance."

With a flirt of her short skirt Ruth settled herself in a chair and drank the coffee Aileen poured out. She was three years younger—nineteen—and harder, though her chin lacked the rounded firmness of her sister's. She had just started work at the same office,

and earned barely enough to keep herself in clothes. But Aileen made up for that. She paid all the expenses of their apartment, and later Peter learned that she had denied herself a much-looked-forward-to holiday in Europe to send Ruth through the University.

"Let me," he said, as she jumped up to take Ruth's cup.

"You're kind."

Ruth yawned. "I must go to bed. How I hate the thought of the office to-morrow! Well, I'll leave you two to kiss good-night."

Peter went rather red, but Aileen laughed. "The things she says!" when Ruth had gone, as if she were a child and Aileen her mother, instead of being only twenty-two. "I worry over her. She's always out with some boy—and never the same one twice."

"You shouldn't worry." Peter swept Ruth into the background. "When can I see you again?"

Her eyes grew suddenly mocking. "Are you sure you want to? Oh, Peter!" For Peter had seized her hand and gripped it hard. "Come round to-morrow evening and I'll show you something." She flushed, as if confessing something disgraceful. "I write a little—poems. I've just had one published in the *Canadian Journal*."

"I'd like to read it."

As he walked back to Hargreave Street through a world strangely hushed and rigid—the mercury had dropped again below zero—he was conscious of

Aileen's face as they had parted at the door. She had withdrawn into herself, as if behind a steel barrier, and shaken hands almost formally. Perhaps she was thinking of Ruth's last remark. . . .

Peter had expected that Aileen's poem would be on love, and was curious to know how she would handle it. Yet when she gave him the magazine he scanned it hurriedly, with instinctive delicacy, feeling that he was about to intrude on her inmost feelings—something too sacred yet to be revealed. But it was about ships, and entitled, "Outward Bound."

"What is more noble than a great ship turning
Into the harbour at dawning of day ;
What has more grace than her slow sweep forward,
Tugs falling back as she gets under way ?

"Decked in the bridal gown lent by the morning,
Clear water round her and flag flying free ;
Done with the dock and the grime and the chaffering,
Gladly she goes to her lover, the sea.

"Where the dark foreland ends, are strong winds blowing ?
Travail she meets with an untroubled mind.
Better by far than the grave of the breaker's yard,
To lie at last with the gods of her kind."

"Do you like it ?" she asked anxiously.

"I think it's beautiful."

"They paid me five dollars !"

"Is that—that's an awful lot for poetry."

"It is, in Canada. Most of the magazines seem to want it just to fill up space when a story ends half-way

down the page, and the few devoted to poetry pay nothing, yet they have a tremendously high standard."

" You must love ships."

" I do. I was born in Nova Scotia. Daddy was a doctor, and I lived there till he died. Oh, Peter, you must go there some time. They used to build ships in the old windjammer days, and the sea is in their blood. 'Blue Nose' sailors, as they call them, are among the best in the world. Halifax is a winter port for liners, and often I've got up at dawn to see one of the big C.P.R. boats come in."

Peter nodded slowly. " I can understand how you feel. I've felt the same at London Docks."

Her eyes glowed. " I should love to see London Bridge. . . ."

He had the thought that London Bridge, as a thing of beauty, like St. Paul's, or Shakespeare's birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon, were regarded as universal possessions by the English-speaking Dominions ; yet Canada was the country of the Canadians, to be developed as they pleased. Curious.

He studied the magazine again. The poem occupied the centre of a page, and, as is usual with Canadian magazines, which are brought out after the American pattern rather than the English, with stories playing hide-and-seek among the advertisements, the decorations were beautifully done. It confirmed an impression that he had been forming : that Aileen was an unusual girl, that she was somebody in her own world. He knew she must occupy a very good position. She had shown him a diamond and

platinum wrist-watch presented to her at Christmas by Mr. and Mrs. Cantrell.

"They're such dears, Peter, and most awfully generous. I often go and see them. I've told them about you, and they want to meet you. You'll see how nice Canadians can be."

But Peter was evasive about this. If he could have gone as a successful man. . . . But, because of Aileen, Mr. Cantrell would probably feel called upon to get him a good job. Which would be terrible.

The question of position soon began to affect his relations with Aileen. In the weeks that followed he came to know well the living room of Apartment 10, 200 Monmouth Avenue, so clean and white and tasteful. It was a haven from shipwreck, from becoming slowly a permanent example of a bum, the worse for being a slightly distinguished one. And with patriotism fired by pin-pricks—"I like Englishmen," one lady had said to him, when he was Gold Sealing, as if there were something rather unusual in the fact—he would have hated to let England down. He relied more and more on the companionship of Aileen. MacTaggert rarely returned before ten o'clock, and then he was dead tired. Snow had disappeared for a while—the Gold Seal Hosiery Company were rumoured to be on the verge of dissolution—and Young and Stenhouse were engaged in some mysterious enterprise out at Portage La Prairie, some fifty miles farther west. And, for all the friends she must have, it seemed that Aileen was lonely too.

She was essentially a Giver, and apparently it had occurred to few that occasionally she would like also to receive.

Sometimes they would go to the movies, in the cheapest seats ; and, a few rows in front of a monstrous silver screen, they watched Romance, according to Hollywood, fit before their eyes : cuties and go-getters, unutterably common, yet possessed of something that half-baked communities could understand and appreciate. Peter learned then from Aileen that intelligent Canadians did not defend all their institutions, constructed largely on the United States plan ; but both countries had in common vast lands to be covered, and they were the best that could be had for the time being. England, so old, so cultured —some said to the point of decay—provided a model of freedom, justice, and government that would only be attained when the preliminary shuffling and settling was over. And Englishmen must adapt themselves like every one else ; it was no good being “high hat.”

“But, dash it all,” said Peter, “I’m not high hat.”

“No, but you rather look it. . . .” Aileen glanced at him sideways, then smiled delightfully. “Do you know, Peter, I’m proud to be seen with you ?”

“And I’ve got sixty cents in my pocket,” thought Peter.

Far more often than going to the movies, they would take a long tramp in the bracing cold, returning to Aileen’s apartment for coffee and “cookies,”

which she plied him with so generously. And once he had taken her to a dance. A red-letter day that. An Aileen, altogether radiant, sitting with him at a little table at the "Samovar." Good food, well served. Music. Colour. Things he had almost forgotten. . . . The delight of having her in his arms, so slim, so just right for him to dance with. The drive back in a taxi, most reckless of all extravagances, with her hand resting lightly on his arm—a gesture in some way peculiarly her own. The glint of her beautiful copper-coloured hair against the white fur collar of her cloak . . . : and something in her eyes at parting that sent him home with thoughts racing madly. . . .

Then, next evening: "Peter—I want to talk to you."

"Carry on." He felt exceedingly genial. He wanted to laugh and joke with everybody, and going out had startled MacTaggert by slapping him heavily on the back.

"It's about expenses."

"Oh."

"You must let me share them." She breathed on the window and then regarded it with her head on one side. "Lots of girls do, you know, these days."

"Sorry, but I don't care to do that."

"But I feel rather mean. . . . We're good friends, aren't we?"

"I hope so."

"Then why not let me?"

"Sorry," he said, with increased inflexion.

"Oh, Peter!"

She saw she had made a mistake in mentioning money at all. For a week he stayed away, concentrating on his work with fanatical devotion, driven by the lash of his despicable poverty, hoping deep in his heart that life was something like a fairy-tale, that some one in authority would see his work and say : "Now that's what I call work. Where's the man that did this? You, young man? Well, I've got just the job for you." And he would let his thoughts run on two hundred dollars a month ; and after that, of course, Aileen. But beyond a casual word of commendation from Edwards, nothing happened.

And then again, with increasing frequency, Edwards would take the chewed cigar from his mouth and regard it intently (Peter knew every gesture by heart) : "Sorry, boys, but there's nothing to-day."

After such a beginning, and the day spent perforce at the library, Peter went round to Aileen's to dinner. He had been invited to try chicken à la king. "I'll show you how well I can cook, Peter."

He was ravenously hungry. He had, in fact, been compelled to sacrifice a midday meal to get one clean shirt taken from his laundry bundle by an unromantic Chinese. But instead of his usual good-humour—it seemed to desert him readily these days—something hard and bleak and ugly formed inside him like a lump. Suppose Aileen knew how hungry he was?

"There!" she said, laying a steaming dish on the

table, and taking off her white overall, which he thought became her amazingly well. He remembered her once saying that no Canadian girl lets housework turn her into a frump. "Now we're ready. We won't wait for Ruth; she won't be in till late."

The delicious odours from the dish made Peter's mouth water; but deliberately he fought down his appetite and barely touched his plate.

"What's the matter? Aren't you hungry?"

"I—no. Not very." He felt boorish and ungracious. "But it's awfully nice. Tell me how you make it."

She eyed him a moment, then returned to her plate. "You must be hungry. Don't be a foolish boy."

So she did know—and pitied him. He declined everything else then, and crumbled miserably at a piece of bread while she finished her own meal.

"Well, if you won't eat it's your own fault."

"Quite," he said stiffly.

"I begin to think you don't like it."

All the generosity in him rose at once. "Of course I do. It's most awfully nice—awfully decent of you——"

There was a strained silence. She rose and carried the dishes into the kitchen.

"Well, if you won't eat, come and be useful."

He followed her into the kitchen, and taking a plate at random, plunged it into scalding water. He hardly noticed the pain. She gave him a dish-cloth.

"I'm going to leave you to do all the work—

there's a hostess for you!—while I get ready. You still want to take me to that lecture, don't you?"

"Yes, of course I do."

Taking her to a miserable free lecture at the "Y," when he would have liked to have given her a supper and dance at the Fort Garry!

And she was being so decent to him—too decent. A savage desire filled him to make her really angry—show her the kind of fellow he really was.

When she returned to the kitchen she was wearing quite a thin coat.

"You'll be cold in that," he said. "Better put on your fur one."

"No, this is all right. Come along, Peter, we'll be late."

He picked up the fur coat—it lay in a chair—and surprisingly it became a fierce, a vital issue. Stiffly he held it out. "You know you catch cold easily. Put it on."

"I certainly won't now!"

At the end of three minutes Peter still held out the coat. Then all at once she gave way. "You're just pig-headed, Peter—a pig-headed schoolboy. Now you've got your own way I hope you'll be happy." And as they went downstairs she said mockingly: "Pig-head! Pig-head!"

Peter flung open the door and caught her arm. "Come along," he said tensely.

She halted and wrenched her arm away. "Whatever is the matter with you to-night? You've been abominably rude!"

"I'm sorry."

"Well—I'm going to punish you. Good-night."

There was a click and he was left staring at the door. For a moment he stood there, then turned unseeingly and tramped away in the snow.

Aileen went slowly upstairs. Mechanically she took off her hat and coat and brushed out her hair before the glass. The dripping of water in the kitchen reproached her. She went in to turn it off. The evidence of Peter's labours lay about the sink ; a wet dish-cloth lay in the middle of a plate. She started to wring it out, then stopped. Somewhere in the snow he was tramping about, cold, hungry, unhappy. And she had let him go.

She hated herself for her efficiency ; for the good position she had. Her mouth quivered. She sat down in a rocking-chair, which is a mother to grief, and rocked herself to and fro. She had hoped so desperately that all would come right, that he would get what his heart wanted without having to show his pride laid bare. He was so honourable. To be broken . . . and she could do nothing. Six hundred dollars lay, snug and secure, in the little red bank-book in her drawer. She wanted to give it, to mother him, to stroke his hair, and then. . . . Her face burned. . . . She got up abruptly and went to the bureau. She took out the bank-book, then put it back. He wouldn't take it. Why did God give material success to a girl, everything but what she wanted ? Ruth had begun to hate her, called her

domineering. And so she was, she thought fiercely. She would live and die, a nasty, efficient, domineering old maid !

She looked in the glass, at her cheeks streaked with tears, at her mouth and chin. What did Peter think of her ? Was she—beautiful ? Oh, Peter ! Peter ! Why didn't he take her if he loved her ? Not let her waste her youth in an office, piling up money and security. A flush spread over her face. She wanted love. She had never petted, never made love lightly, as many girls she knew at home had. But she had depths. She would give, eagerly, passionately, to a man she could care for. A fine man. And Peter was honourable. Strong. She wished he had beaten her, she thought suddenly, and flushed again. It was dreadful to be hungry. . . . She wanted to belong to a man, to be part of him so much that she would be hurt when he was hurt. To give : to give : and to be given to, because a man would do as much for any of his possessions. She would have hated Peter to have had no pride ; and because he had too much there was all this trouble. She sat down in the rocking-chair again and broke out weeping again, a pitiful surrender that she knew for weeks had been coming. There was no one to turn to. Her father was dead ; her mother had ignored her, with the cold dislike of a beautiful woman who makes a wrong marriage and finds herself tied to the family of an unsuccessful doctor who surrounds himself with dreams. “I wish you were here,” she whispered, to the photo in the silver frame on the mantelpiece. Peter had looked at

that photo. "My father," she had said. "You've got the same look in the eyes sometimes," he remarked.

She got up. She must find Peter. Suppose he were lying down in the snow, ill and helpless? She almost wished he were; she could force him to accept her help then. She looked at the mark he had made on her arm, and burning inwardly, defiantly, kissed it passionately. Then putting on her hat and coat, the fur one, she left the house.

Right out at the city limits Peter stood on a bridge over the Assiniboine, snow-covered banks and frozen river gleaming white in the cold clear light of the moon. There was a deep silence.

Aileen had not pitied him, he could see now. She had paid him the compliment of active resentment at his rudeness, though she might understand very well the reason for it. Her face at parting. . . . "I'm a dam' fool," he muttered. "I had better go back."

His body felt exhausted, but he drew on hidden stores of vitality conserved—who knows?—when he was playing cricket at school æons ago, or eating meals he didn't particularly want. "Have some guts," he muttered, as he trudged along the endless snow-covered pavements. "Have some blasted guts."

When at last he reached Monmouth Avenue and rang at Aileen's apartment, there was no answer. She was out. He stood there a moment swaying, his face old; then he dragged himself back to Hargreave Street. "Have some blasted guts," he muttered, and laughed.

Two o'clock struck. Peter, sitting by the window in his overcoat, finished the last of a large packet of sandwiches and sighed in content. Aileen had left a little note with them : "I want you to eat these." And he had—every crumb.

MacTaggert was quietly sleeping. Peter gazed out at the rows of white roofs, glittering in the moon, so clean and peaceful. The great city of the prairies had stopped, for a space, growing and getting, and was at rest. Somewhere out there was Aileen, sleeping also. Aileen. He thought of her. . . . The emotion that Pauline had awakened in him rose again in a fierce passion that took possession of his body. He wanted Aileen!—wanted her! He tortured himself with memories : the way she looked in the white overall with the round collar which she wore in the kitchen ; her graceful, swinging stride ; the trick she had of putting her head on one side when drawing on her gloves . . . of suddenly parting her lips when she was interested . . . the fragrance of her. . . .

He pressed his head against the ice-cold pane. To see her now. . . . He could understand how Pauline felt when she wanted to go out in the street and pick up the first man she saw. He wished he were cold and passionless. . . . His body, half-starved of food, was still young and vital, was blazing with desire. He despised himself utterly ; cursed himself ; tried to control himself ; the next minute he was wanting her again. . . .

Restlessly he wandered down to the bathroom, had a drink of water, and came back. His body was in a

fever and his pyjamas were damp with perspiration.

MacTaggert stirred and woke.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Thinking of some pretty lady?"

"Oh, go to hell, Mac!"

MacTaggert snuggled back into the blankets.

"Ah me, I must get me a pretty lady. . . ."

Peter abruptly took off his coat and got into bed. The passion in him had died. To put Aileen—his Aileen—on a level with *that*. He buried his head in the pillow. Then a curious feeling came to him : that Aileen was standing by his bedside. There was a wonderful tenderness in her eyes. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

RUTH was essentially a product of young Canada. She galloped through life, grudging the hours spent stationary at an office. Whereas Doctor Morrow had adored his wife, loved Aileen and leaned on her, calling her his second partner, he had an indulgent smile and a pat on the cheek for Ruth ; and she pursued adolescence with hardly a check except what Aileen imposed. When the doctor died, and his wife, after a short period of widowhood, which Aileen thankfully forgot, died also, Ruth felt the last string had gone. Boys, properly handled, were the keys to open the dazzling gates of the world. Aileen was a dear, but " all wet." She took from her, thanked casually, and forgot. She was quite content for Aileen to earn for her as long as might be necessary ; but Aileen, in her wisdom, got her a position at the same office to try to steady her down. " Oh, gosh," said Ruth. But she gave way. Clothes cost money, and boys liked to take out a swell dresser. University education, which Aileen had paid for, had done nothing except give a superficial polish and smartness. She knew all the latest College tunes, and could dance, in the prevailing whirlwind fashion, with style and distinction. She could kick higher

than the next girl. Landed in the office and bidden to concentrate on insurance, she tried to vamp Mr. Cantrell, but was quite oblivious of his good qualities. She tried to vamp every man within reach. She knew, with sublime confidence, that she could take care of herself all right ; and Sex was an open book. In time she would probably have tried to vamp Peter, though Englishmen as a class were stiff and stuck-up, and too serious to know what you were talking about. When she came upon any difficulty in her work she said, "Oh, gosh," and tried to make the nearest boy do it for her. But she had youth and terrific vitality, which she radiated round. In a week she knew every one at the office, every one in the block, and all the facts about them she thought worth acquiring. The snappiest salesman on the staff had taken her out, and the next snappiest was going to. She chewed gum steadily, which distorted her pretty mouth, and devoured lurid true confession stories. She knew all about the film stars; and the "dope" on their inside lives. Emphatically she was her mother's daughter, while Aileen belonged to her father. Sometimes she made Aileen feel a hundred years old. "I wonder if I am all wet," thought Aileen sometimes, when this damning epithet had been applied to her ; and if her ideals were all wrong and Ruth's all right. Snappiness was the prevailing tenor, though extreme innocence and self-sacrifice were still present. Andy King, the big red-haired boy, spent all his money and half his nights on correspondence courses of the most spectacular kind,

and was now engaged in studying to be a Captain of Industry in ten lessons ; and poor Evelyn Braddon, twenty-six, who had never had a boy, denied herself every pleasure to pay for one specialist after another to try to cure her mother.

Aileen, who had her father's interest in and love for human nature, thought some boys were kinder than girls. The time Evelyn Braddon broke down in public and cried and cried, the snappiest salesman, who happened to be present, fetched her a glass of water and carried her in his arms into the rest-room. "Do you feel better, Evelyn ?" asked the girls, standing round. "Gosh," said Ruth, and stared at her. Grief, real tragic grief, was something outside her experience. Evelyn was gasping ; she seemed to be going into a fit. "Do you feel better, Evelyn ?" said one of the girls. A boy phoned for a doctor ; and finally Aileen, who had hurried to Mr. Cantrell, obtained leave to take her home. The snappiest salesman offered his car. Aileen lectured Ruth that night. "You were nearest to her : why didn't you do something ?" She felt ashamed of her own sex. "Gosh," said Ruth, "what could I do ?" "Oh—try and be a little less hard," said Aileen. Ruth made a face at her behind her back. She was sorry, terribly sorry, for Evelyn Braddon, but what could she do ? Aileen was all wet.

Ruth used the apartment to sleep in, briefly, and eat in when she wasn't going out. Aileen spoilt her ; she cooked all the meals and did most of the dusting and cleaning. And she steeled herself to try to

control her as her father would have wished. She vetoed her most extravagant pleasures, and Ruth reluctantly obeyed. There was something about Aileen that compelled respect. She had once seen her blaze out against a man for ill-treating a dog. But she was a child no longer ; she was earning her own money, if only ten dollars a week ; and all of Aileen's efforts were not successful. There were scenes.

The evening after the disastrous invitation to dinner, Peter called to make amends. A good day's work, with a whole job put in his charge, had restored his self-respect, and also calm judgment. He felt he had behaved like a child ; and worse, caused her unhappiness when she had enough trouble already. For though loyalty and reserve kept her silent, he guessed a good deal of her worry for Ruth. But his apology was never delivered. The door of the apartment was ajar, and coming forth were sounds of violent altercation. In one chair was Ruth ; beside her stood a thin, hook-nosed boy of twenty or so—Ed Peters, the next snappiest salesman. “Aw, Miss Aileen,” he was saying, “we were only petting.”

Aileen was in a towering passion. Her beautiful copper-coloured hair, that Peter loved so, was in disorder ; her face was pale ; her brown eyes blazed. She seemed to radiate electric fury. Ed Peters was afraid of her. He gulped. “Aw, Miss Aileen——” he began again.

“You beast ! ” she cried. “I could—— Oh, I could kill you. Get out ! Get out ! ”

She beat at him with her fists. "Ailie!" gasped Ruth. The boy dodged round Aileen and scampered past Peter down the stairs. The entrance door closed behind him with a crash.

Aileen dropped to her knees beside her sister. "Ruthie—honey, promise me you won't see him again."

"I certainly will not!"

Ruth pushed her aside, and getting up, began to put on her hat and coat. Her small face was set hard.

"Where are you going, dear?"

"Out. I'm sick of the way you interfere. I can't call my soul my own. What business is it of yours what we do? You've sent Ed away for good now. Do you think he'll come back after what you've done?"

"But, honey—"

"Don't honey me!"

With an abrupt "Good-evening" to Peter, Ruth swept by and down the stairs. Again the door below crashed.

Aileen turned, pale and distressed. With instinctive Canadian courtesy, that in some respects is deeper than English, she said, "I'm so sorry you've seen—"

"Please!" he said. "I'm your friend."

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come." She sank into a chair. With a vague remembrance of the requirements of his mother, Peter went into the kitchen and made her a cup of tea. She drank it thankfully.

"Peter, Ruth has left me. What should I have

done? I've tried so hard. But she's bad. The same thing happened before father died. That boy, Ed Peters—he brought her home at four o'clock last night, and I found them together to-night. She was sitting on his lap."

"But there's—there's no real harm done?" He flushed slightly as he said this, but Aileen did not seem to notice.

"No, I don't think so, but——"

"Well, Ruth'll be back."

Aileen brushed the hair back from her forehead. When next she spoke her voice was strange, her eyes were fixed as if she were in a trance. "I must go after her."

"That won't do any good." He tried to speak reasonably. "Let it blow over. She'll come in later."

Aileen took no notice. She got up and moved towards the door, speaking in the same quiet way. "She'll throw herself in the river. She's said so...."

Peter took her by the arms then and forced her into a chair. "Sit down, Aileen."

She struggled violently. "Let me go!"

"Aileen, my darling girl——"

"Let me go...."

Her head drooped and she grew limp. Peter lifted her in his arms and carried her to the couch. She seemed in a dead faint. He dashed to the kitchen for water and sprinkled it on her forehead. She gave a little sigh and came round. Peter made use of a Canadian expression. "Gosh," he said.

"Peter," she whispered, "don't leave me."

"Of course I won't."

She clung tightly to his hand. Gradually her breathing grew easier; the colour returned to her cheeks. He stood motionless. He knew now that whatever might happen in the future they belonged to each other. He felt older since he had entered the room. Before she had seemed more fully developed than he; now, in a moment of stress brought on by her abnormal affection for her sister, he had overreached her. And they were as they should be.

She stirred and gave a little cry, like a child frightened in its sleep. He put his hand on her hair and began, softly, to stroke it.

The little silver clock on the mantelpiece pinged out ten. Aileen sat up and yawned. "I must have been asleep."

He stretched his cramped limbs surreptitiously. "Feel better now?"

"Yes. . . . You think Ruth will come back?"

"Sure of it. She'll come in quietly later. Don't say much, and it'll all blow over." He hesitated. Even Aileen's trust in him did not give him the right to intrude. "I—Aileen, I shouldn't worry over her quite so much in future. She can take care of herself."

"I suppose so. But I have always looked after her. You see things weren't very well at home. Mother and father—didn't get on. And when we were small we had a nurse who was rather a beast.

. . . And after father died there was very little money, so I just had to set to work as best I could. People have been awfully good."

"They would be—to you."

"I don't see why . . . Peter, dear?"

"Yes?"

"I can't thank you for what you've done. Everything seemed to go."

"Why should you thank me? You must know. . . . I had better be going now. I'll phone you in the morning. You'll go to bed now, won't you?"

"Yes, Peter."

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night." She raised her lips. They were hot and dry. He was aware that some cycle of emotion that he did not fully understand had taken place. All her defences were down, and she was his. With a sense of protection strong in him, he barely touched her lips with his own, then closed the door softly and went downstairs.

He telephoned in the morning. Ruth had returned. There had been a reconciliation. Peter felt a sneaking gratitude for Ruth. She had broken the iron band of reserve between him and Aileen. He could see her point and Aileen's; and the two seemed incompatible. He hoped the problem would be solved by Ruth marrying—such ventures were launched upon on twenty dollars a week, which was about what Ed Peters was making, with the girl working as well.

Then Peter turned to another more personal problem. Aileen's standards were high : as his own had been a year ago, he thought bitterly. Should he tell her about Pauline ? Honour demanded that he should ; but so many other problems were in the way of their marrying yet, or even hoping to, that common sense dictated that he should let the affair with Pauline die. Many men, he argued, had had experience before they married ; and few had the loneliness, failure, and actual hunger that he had to put up with. So he decided. But he did not know Aileen—or himself. After their first real kiss, she turned to him and said :

“I've kept myself for this, Peter.”

He flushed hotly and said nothing. The standards of men and women are accepted to be different ; but that seemed to make no difference where honour was concerned. Still, he said nothing. There was a long silence. He felt his face growing redder and redder, and there was a sinking feeling inside him, a crumbling away, as if all this time he had been living on some inferior plane to her. Other men's ideas, MacTaggert's, made no difference. He ought to have stuck to his guns. To have had more guts. He was a quitter. He felt like cutting his throat.

At length Aileen looked at him with her clear eyes. “Did—you pay her, Peter ? I've heard that men pay girls for such things.” She flushed. Then she went on remorselessly : “You see, I've got no father, no one to advise me. I mean, it might not be fair or right for us to marry. I've got to think of

that, though you haven't asked me yet. But you kissed me. You may be——” She couldn't go on.

“It's all right,” he said in a low voice. “It's over. And I didn't pay her.”

“I should have thought you would have had more courage !” she burst out. “It seems so degrading. If you didn't love her——”

“I'll tell you.”

“No. I don't want to know.”

“Well, I'll tell you something. Do you know the rotten time I've had in this country ? A girl was kind to me. Haven't you ever been lonely ?”

“Many a time.”

“Well then.”

But it did not sound convincing. Soon after he got up to go.

“Good-bye, Aileen.”

“Good-bye.”

He was too proud to say any more. She let him go, then suddenly called him back. “Peter, what am I doing ? Come back. It was before you met me, and it's over. I suppose men and women are different ; only it seems so fine. . . .”

He stood with set face. There was nothing he could say.

“Tell me, Peter, do you love me ? Really love me ? Tell me !”

“Yes,” he answered.

“That's all I want to know. I'm—happy.”

But he felt utterly unworthy as he went down the stairs.

When they met again neither made any allusion to the conversation. Aileen met him with a smiling face ; she was gay, charming, confiding. He tried to act as if nothing had happened. But he was no longer a knight on horseback. He was humbled to the dust. He had nothing now to offer. He tried to make up by exceptional kindness, and Aileen met him eagerly half-way. But the old thrill of life was gone. His heart seemed cased in iron. Not a word of love could he say. And Aileen scoured herself for what she considered a hasty judgment, for setting him up too high. "I've lost him," she thought, and wept in secret.

Peter, asked frankly now, did he or did he not love her, could not have answered. She knew his degradation, the utter worst of him. He wanted desperately to forget, to wipe it out in renewed action and ambition. Above all, he wanted to get out of Winnipeg for a time.

CHAPTER XV

PETER walked slowly down Main Street and under the C.P.R. bridge to a small park beyond. The day was quite mild, and all around the world was slowly awakening from the rigidity of winter and preparing for the great spring revival. Melted snow dripped from everywhere, formed into puddles against which nothing short of waders were a protection, and fed swishing streams down the gutters ; roofs and beams gave little cracks, as if testing their strength after the iron grip of twenty below zero, and points of architecture, so long obscured under a vague white outline, began to appear again ; in the park the accustomed white was spotted with dirty brown and then green ; and—to set the official seal on it—park keepers were setting out again the wooden benches.

Peter sat down and lighted a cigarette to stave off the pangs of hunger induced by a tea-and-toast breakfast. Once more for the tenth—or was it the twentieth?—time the Sun Electric had failed him. “Nothing to-day, boys,” Edwards had said ; and the boys had repaired to the streets, the library, the police court, to pass the time.

Peter was fighting the old battle with hunger and

the rent. This evening he was to meet Aileen ; and twenty cents in his pocket was kept back for a clean shirt. "I can't do it," he thought. "I can't keep up pretences any longer. Damn it, I want a square meal. If I go on much longer I shall ask her for one." He flushed darkly. If the chicken dinner of disastrous memory had been set before him now he would probably have grabbed and ate it. He smoked the cigarette out slowly, intent on the pleasure of it. His face was lean ; his wrists woefully thin. His hat had been brushed and brushed again ; his heels inked to hide the holes in his socks. Aileen had almost pleaded to be allowed to mend them. He had refused, his pride riding his heart like a devil.

"Damn the lot," he thought suddenly ; "I'm a bum—why not own it ?"

He impaled the cigarette end on a pin and continued to smoke to the last shred of tobacco. Two men came and sat down beside him. They glanced at him once or twice, then one spoke :

"Up against it, buddy ?"

"Enjoying the view," said Peter.

"Oh, ah." The man did not know how to take this. Peter was still obviously a gentleman, and a sports coat, cut by a good tailor, can lend an impression of wealth for a long, long time ; but there were his worn shoes, and one ink-mark had slipped, showing bare flesh through a ragged wound in the sock.

"Well," said the man at last, "do you want a job ?"

"What kind of job ?"

"Railroad—thirty cents an hour." The speaker, a short shock-headed man of about thirty, with extraordinarily bright blue eyes, turned to his companion. "We're going, aren't we, Jack? We're sick to death of this bum spot."

"So am I," admitted Peter.

"Then come with us. A railway bull named White has come from Hearst to get men for the track gang. Wants thirty. We've told him we'll help pull them in. We go out this evening, ten o'clock, C.N.R. station."

Fort Alexander over again, thought Peter. Terrific rush. Men wanted at once! Then suddenly the rush over, and they could go to hell in the way that suited them best. But at least it was a chance, and a benevolent railroad paid their fares.

"All right, I'll come."

"That's the boy! I'm Dusty and this is Jack. What's your name?"

"Jim." Adversity had developed Peter's sense of humour, and more than once he had thought of changing his work name to Alf or Bert; but somehow he felt more like a Jim.

"Well, you won't let us down, will you? We've been at it all morning, and only got ten. Guess they'd rather bum around the city, most of them."

"I'll be there," promised Peter, and thinking of MacTaggert, said, "I may be able to bring another man with me."

"That's fine. Bring all you can. So long, Jim. Ten o'clock, C.N.R. station, eh?"

It was a curious custom among the rank and file, tacking "eh" on to the end of a request. It was more than a figure of speech : it had a psychological significance. In a land of many nationalities, a man uncertain of his position would use it at the end of a command. It was never "Pass that hammer," or "Pass that hammer, please"; it was "Pass that hammer, eh?" The recipient was in a quandary. He couldn't well refuse, but if he did as he was told other and more direct commands would follow. Usually he retaliated in kind, and the day's work was sprinkled with "eh's" like cloves in a pudding.

After Dusty—Peter gathered that his real name was Miller—and Jack had gone, he returned to the city and telephoned to Aileen, for if he were to pack, see MacTaggart, and be at the station by ten, he would not have time to see her again.

There was a little silence after he had explained briefly what he was going to do, then a steady voice said : "I wish you all the luck in the world, Peter."

Peter still held the receiver. He thought of the job he was going to, of his present position. There was nothing he could say. "Thank you," he said thickly. The receiver clicked. He stood for a long time in the box, his eyes dark. "She might have . . ." he thought. It did not strike him that Aileen might be proud too ; that with his clothes in rags he still might have something to offer as a man.

It was striking ten when Peter arrived in the station with MacTaggart, and they had had to run

all the way, for MacTaggart had not returned till late. But he had not hesitated about going.

"I've drawn my pay, and I guess I shall be laid off next week. Goldberg's getting ready to hop—the last lot of "clearance" stock we sent out was so much so that I guess the factory called them 'throw-outs.' "

Dusty and Jack they found waiting, and some dozen others, with White, a tall, thin, stoop-shouldered man in the uniform of the railway police. As events proved, he was unsuited to his job; for one moment he would be kind-hearted to the point of foolishness, and the next show sudden and extraordinary ferocity to some poor tramp whose only crime was taking a free ride at the expense of the railroad. It was evident, too, that he was suffering from some malignant stomach disease, for his face was unhealthily moist and pale, and his breath made it impossible to sit near him. At the moment the kind-hearted mood was uppermost. After the train had started he produced a roll of bills from his hip-pocket and handed each man a dollar.

"That's for smokes. You can pay me back when you get your first pay cheques."

The men nodded agreement, but Peter thought White was extremely optimistic. Even Winnipeg, the bum's Mecca, the drain, the cesspool of the floating population of the West, must have been strained to produce such a collection. There were two French-Canadians, a German, a Swede, a Finn, and the rest of British descent. There was no in-

terest, no sense of adventure among them. Labour is more mobile in Canada than in England ; it is nothing for a man to travel two or three hundred miles to a job, work for a few months, then depart for somewhere else, leaving behind nothing more permanent than a few cigarette ends. Work—money—food—maybe a woman. . . . All were dirty and dishevelled, their eyes glazed and apathetic, and the Finn had an aching tooth. He roamed up and down the car, frequently stopping and showing his mouth. "I pull at her, but she no come—son-of-a-bitch." Dusty quickly established himself as a "character." He and Jack, it seemed, had been firemen on a railroad, though why they had deserted a comparatively skilled and well-paid job Peter never learned. As another might feel for tobacco, Dusty brought out his mouth-organ, and after some preliminary skirling, broke into a refrain that was to become as familiar and monotonous as the clacking of the wheels.

"Moma goes here, moma goes there,
Moma goes dam' near everywhere ;
But poor old popsa, poor old popsa,
He goes nowhere at all."

And the same thing over and over again.

About a day and a half it took them to Hearst. The route was more northerly than the one Peter had travelled out on, and much less civilized. On both sides of the track was dense bush, broken occasionally by vast sheets of fresh water which might extend

for miles, and stopping-places that hardly seemed to justify their existence as stations. Between these were many "quarter sections"—small clearings beside the track formed by a man and his wife, mostly French-Canadians. As the train went by they would come out from their rude cabins and stare, round-eyed, as if not to miss an instant of the marvellous event. The railroad was the mother and the father of their being, the means of marketing their produce, their only link with the nearest small town. If they could not afford to ride in, they tramped along the track.

During the journey White disbursed more dollars, and at each lunch stop the men stormed the refreshment room. It was evident that the expedition was going to cost him something, for, as he told Peter, he was merely doing the job unofficially for the roadmaster, who was desperately short of labour. But his chief difficulty was to keep watch on the men so that none of them "jumped the train." Some had no intention of working on the track, and had merely accepted the job to travel east in comfort, intending to disappear at a point convenient to themselves. White enlisted the help of Peter and MacTaggert, and Dusty and Jack, as being the most reliable, and just before the train started there would be a round-up. Yet, despite all precautions, two men got away in the darkness before they arrived at Hearst.

The others were shepherded at once into the office of the roadmaster who was responsible for the up-keep of the track in the division. This was sub-

divided into sections of ten or twelve miles, each under a foreman with two or three men.

At ten o'clock he came in—a man named Caron, short, powerfully built, typically French-Canadian with his pale, flat features and dark eyes and hair. His eyes swept contemptuously over the material gathered by White.

"Any of you boys work on de track before?"

The two French-Canadians stepped forward.
"Oui, M'sieu le Roadmaster."

Caron addressed them in French, appearing to hail them as brothers amid a crowd of misfits. Presently they departed together, grinning broadly.

Caron reverted to English. "I'm sending you to de sections in pairs. Two will go to Wapiti, two to Bertram, two to Kabina, and so on. Now chose de partners."

This pairing-off was an important business. It meant that except for the foreman and an occasional Sunday in Hearst or Kapuskashing some fifty miles farther east, another small town, or a few minutes' chat with a passing fire-ranger, they would have no company but each other's for months. They would work together, eat together, sleep together. The care in choosing a best friend, a wife even, pales before that in choosing a partner in the bush.

Peter and MacTaggert, of course, paired together, and Dusty and Jack. After a deal more discussion the destinations were settled. Peter found he was bound for Wapiti—the name is Indian and means English Girl. It was destined to have a far greater significance

for him than that. Their nearest neighbours would be Dusty and Jack at Bertram, seven miles west. Then came the question : where were they to sleep ? They could not be shipped out (as if they were a consignment of rails !) till next morning ; and Duane, the provincial policeman and chief representative of law and order in the town, said bluntly that he had no desire to have a lot of bums parked in the church hall. More discussion. More argument, Duane's voice, harsh and hectoring, reiterating the word "bums" ; White's, alternately querulous and pleading, dwelling equally on "poor boys." Peter sat down on a bench and dozed through it all. He felt vaguely that it was a contest of wills between the high gods rather than concern for their welfare, and as long as they had somewhere to sleep he did not mind where. They could hardly be left outside all night with labels attached.

Eventually a decision was reached. They were to sleep in the jail—the "coop," as it was known colloquially.

" You'll be quite comfortable, boys," White assured them. " I'll light a fire and leave the door unlocked."

" And lose all your men before morning," muttered Duane.

" You won't let me down, will you, boys ? "

The boys shook their heads. " Sure won't, Mr. White," one assured him earnestly. Peter shook his head with the rest. He had a violent desire to laugh, and looking at the anxious solemn faces, wondered

why they didn't see the joke too. The glorious dignity of their job ! Half an hour's discussion : "Bums"—"Poor boys"—then to sleep in the jail ! And White imploring them not to let him down !

Apparently, whenever men were wanted in a hurry, (*a*) the job was no good, (*b*) only the most desperate would take it, (*c*) people thought no good of them for taking it.

Duane pursed his lips disapprovingly and walked away. These railway policemen ! White led his contingent to a drab concrete building on waste ground in the middle of the town.

Peter lay gazing up at a whitewashed ceiling. Shadows cast by a huge glowing stove in the middle of the room (the jail was built on generous lines) weaved across it like the flicking fingers of the deaf and dumb. In the centre, unchanging, were three broad bars reflected from the door, which stood slightly ajar. On one side of him was the wall ; on the other the huddled form of MacTaggart. The deep heavy sigh of twelve men breathing merged gently into the brooding soliloquy from the stove, so calm and stolid and reassuring.

He felt warm and comfortable ; two thick blankets were between him and the stone floor. The day, which had promised so little, had ended on a higher scale. White had invited four of them down to supper and sent food up for the rest. Peter had liked Mrs. White ; she was thin, colourless, but she had kindly eyes, and she had taken him aside to sew a

button on his coat and insisted on giving him a pair of her husband's thick socks. He did not need to feel proud with her.

He turned over to the wall to go to sleep. Something on the whitewashed surface caught his eye. In a rude, uneducated hand was written : "I love Maybel."

Maybel. . . . Aileen. . . .

How long ago since he had left her !

CHAPTER XVI

THE "Eastbound" came in with a rush and a roar, bell tolling, steam rising in clouds about the mighty bulk of the locomotive. Behind the tender, crouched up against the steel wall of the water tank, out of sight of the engineer and fireman, Peter glimpsed two men—"riding the blind"; while lying along the brake rods underneath the coaches were at least half a dozen more. So that was how one got a free ride!

But the method had its dangers. As soon as the train began to slow, men rolled out on to the ballast, picked themselves up, and ran as hard as they could up the track; intending to lie in wait a mile or so farther on and board the train when it started again with a fresh engine and crew—Hearst, of course, being a division point.

Here was where White came into the picture. "After 'em!" he shouted, and lumbered heavily in their wake, followed by most of his temporary guests, Peter and MacTaggert included. Peter singled out a tall lanky fellow who was springing along in great bounds, glancing now and again over his shoulder. It was this turning round that proved his undoing, for he tripped over a tie and came crashing to the ground; and in a moment Peter was on top of him.

" — you ! get off my chest ! "

Peter got up, but grasped him by the arm. Though his sympathies were beginning to be very much with the under-dog and he felt like letting the man go, there was his duty to White, and the railway policeman had treated him well. So he prepared to lead back his captive.

The man gave him a sidelong glance, measuring his strength, then suddenly produced a dirty roll of bills. " I know this — . He's one son-of-a-bitch. I give you a dollar, you let me go, eh ? "

Peter stared. The man wasn't broke—he might have fifty dollars or more: why then did he run such a risk instead of paying his fare ? Later he knew the answer : it was just the difference between a " bum " and a " hobo. " A bum was the worst sort of beggar who would do anything rather than work ; a hobo, with wanderlust in his soul, would work his way from place to place, sawing wood or doing other chores, but his professional pride would not allow him to indulge in the enervating ease of riding inside a coach, no, not in the coldest weather when his frozen limbs put him in danger of being flung off the train at forty miles an hour, or the ballast on a loose road-bed cut his face red and raw. Sometimes he was an outcast from society ; always he scorned it. He would cheat but not beg. He knew places and cities, and could give a cameo sketch of each, with human nature marked down like a bargain counter. He had neither kith nor kin. He lived in the darkness and the dawn. He slept when he was tired. When

he was old and his strength left him, he died in loneliness, with his boots on. So he rode on the railroad, free, from place to place. The tender, the empty box-car (this was his greatest joy, to lie in the corner and doze away the miles, tempered only by the sudden appearance of a "shack"—brakeman—who carried a fearful armament, which often included a revolver), the coach without rods, which meant gripping hand-holds behind a swaying blind of steel for maybe hours on end, and one slip a terrible death—each had its mysteries and method of attack; and he was master of them all.

"I give you a dollar, eh?" he repeated.

Peter merely shook his head, and in silence led him back to the station. The others, he found, had done the same. Only one man had got away—a tribute to the strength and activity of White's "guests."

It was now that White showed the inconsistency in his character. Instead of making them wait till the train had departed and then turning them out of the town—the usual procedure—he incontinently drove them before him to the "coop" and locked them up without a fire. That should show Duane the sort of man he was! Duane, watching from the platform (as were most of the town: it was their grandstand for passing life), merely shrugged and pursed his lips. These railway policemen!

The Westbound—the train that would take them to their destination—came in at noon; and by that time they had explored every inch of Hearst: the

main street, wide and rutted, with boarded sidewalks, and buildings mostly timber structures of depressing aspect. Half of them seemed to be barber shops; one had almost said gossip shops, for there was always a little group round the stove, the chairman of gatherings winter and summer. Here and there a solid stone building marked a bank. A post office reached to the realms of haberdashery and footwear. Peter gazed at a pair of child's socks marked twenty-five cents. He had to look at something. Two Ford cars (the same two) rattled and banged from one end of the street to the other, stopping every few yards. The owners disdained to walk. They scattered dirty brown slush about from their wheels royally. There was an immense population of dogs which seemed to have no particular owners. Otherwise the street was deserted. It bore traffic, but no genial intercourse of souls. It had no life in it. "Dead from the feet up," came to Peter's mind. Hearst was sinking back from the boom from which it came.

There were, of course, side-turnings. Like its sisters, right up to the big cities, Hearst was built on the American block system. The smallest resident knew which was north and which south. The streets east and west were flanked by wooden residences with the inevitable verandas; and farther still in the background were water towers of various works, poised aloft on slender steel frames—as necessary to the establishment of a real "town" as the aspidistra was to a Victorian parlour.

It was not two minutes before Dusty had his mouth-

organ out. It is certain that he would not have played it down Lord Street, say, in his native Liverpool ; but such is the effect of being in a strange town in a strange land for a few hours (and Duane and White engaged elsewhere), that he and Jack paraded up and down to the strains of "moma goes here, moma goes there," Peter and MacTaggert, feeling very ridiculous, following behind. Nobody spoke to them, but Peter saw eyes peering from behind blinds, and a man about to crank his car straightened up and stared, his eyes travelling in a steady semicircle as they passed. His thoughts were easy to read : "Mad—bums—oughter be locked up."

Fortunately at noon their train came in, and half an hour later they were at Wapiti, in the heart of the bush, the train slowing just sufficiently to allow them to jump off.

"So long !" shouted Dusty. "We'll see you one Sunday in Hearst—we'll get up a football team."

The train whistled and receded into the distance. They were left contemplating their new home : a two-storeyed shack built up from the track embankment on piles ; beside it a small shed where the track cars and implements were kept ; and farther down, about fifty yards, where the road narrowed again to single line, a solitary signal twinkling greenly in the sunlight.

Wapiti.

They had been told by the roadmaster that a French-Canadian, Michaud, was there besides the foreman, Falardeau. But there was no sign of them.

The section-house door was locked. They sat on the steps to wait.

At half-past six the foreman returned, chugging smoothly down the line on a gasoline-operated "speeder," with the other man sitting behind. A pleasant existence, thought Peter; and this impression was strengthened when they were welcomed enthusiastically and shown their quarters: a room on the ground floor (the second floor was unoccupied), furnished with a stove and two bunks, and an abundance of packing-cases for tables and chairs. Their meals they were expected to cook for themselves, the provisions being obtained from Hearst every week. Naturally, they had nothing, so Falardeau lent them some of his and wrote out a list of foodstuffs necessary: bacon, beans, eggs, butter, a dozen loaves of bread, tea, and condensed milk, which he would send into Hearst to-morrow by a trainman, and which would be deducted from their first pay cheques. He then showed them how to work the stove, indicated the wood-pile at the back which they must help to maintain, and retired to the next room which he shared with Michaud.

"This is great!" said Peter, as he sliced thick strips of beautiful fat bacon and laid them in the frying-pan on top of the roaring stove.

MacTaggert grinned. "Wouldn't old Snow like to be here!"

They both laughed. Surely, to the fortunate, the life of a section-man, though poorly paid, was a veritable paradise.

Supper was a tremendous meal, a meal of many courses, a meal ending with the luxury of canned pears ; then after washing up with the scrupulous care of new-comers, they retired to their bunks.

Peter awoke with a start an hour later to think an earthquake was in progress. There was a dull roar, rising rapidly to a hurricane of sound which shook the wooden structure till the pots and pans rattled ; then it died away as rapidly in the distance. The Westbound Passenger had gone through. With a delicious feeling of security he turned over and went to sleep again.

“ Come along, boys.”

At seven minutes to eight Falardeau hammered on the partition ; and hastily finishing their breakfast, they went outside. The foreman and Michaud were waiting by the speeder which had been wheeled out of the shed. It was lifted on the track, one end at a time, then started up, and Peter and MacTaggert clambered on behind. They were going to survey the section before starting work. The rails were not secured to the ties—sleepers—by iron “ chairs,” as in England, but simply fastened down by large spikes ; and these had to be watched to see they did not work loose.

At a pleasant twenty miles an hour they speeded along. The scenery was magnificent. Mile after mile of dense bush, the sun striking through in a profusion of green shades, though never quite dispelling the air of brooding and mystery that is part

of these vast tracts of virgin forest—for the snow had all disappeared, and Nature, impatient, was already reclothing the trees. She was royally generous. So in a moment of Divine conception might an artist have flung on his colours—flung them on, mixing and working with savage intensity. And above was the blue of the sky, deeply, vividly blue. Now they would pass over a narrow stream, swollen to a raging torrent by melted snow ; now they rumbled across a long trestle bridge over a vast expanse of water which extended on each side as far as the eye could see. Michaud turned. “ You catch pike ? Some in dere —son-of-a-bitch, yes ! I show you. We get ones twenty—thirty pound.” He grinned.

Peter grinned back. After his long, almost monastic, existence away from living green, except what a park could supply, the wonderful profusion of the bush made his heart thrill like an instrument tuned to some old key. He had almost forgotten all this. He wanted to explore. It was a day made for tramping. He looked eagerly for moose, which could sometimes be seen. From a man grown lean, scrambling, like the others, for dollars, he became a boy again. MacTaggert’s older face was at peace too. The fresh, clean air, bearing with it the scent of pine trees, made them breathe deeply. They exchanged glances. They were in clover indeed.

All too soon the ride came to an end. Reaching the end of the section, they turned the car round and came back half a mile to the place where work had

stopped the day before. Laid along the track were new ties, great bulks of timber weighing a hundred pounds or more ; and the whole section—seven miles —had to be completely relaid before the end of July. August and September were spent in putting in “ shims ”—thin strips of wood which went between the tie and the rail—and levelling up ; thus ensuring the minimum of attention being necessary when the ground was frozen hard and covered with snow.

They got out the tools—the picks, shovels, hammers, and track-bars—and at once Falardeau became a changed man. Gone was the easy geniality of last night. He was the worst of all taskmasters, a married man with many children, in constant fear of losing his job ; and to placate the roadmaster when he came round on one of his periodical tours of inspection, he worked with frantic speed himself—worked out of all reason—and tried to make his men do the same. It was dig, dig, dig, till the back ached, to remove the hard ballast from under the old tie, heart-breaking tugs to get it out, then tamping the ballast under the new one, and hammering down the spikes.

Soon Peter was drenched with sweat. As new hands, he and MacTaggert were expected to put in from eleven to fifteen ties a day. (The foreman and Michaud did over twenty, but then they had been working at the job, for various railroads, for most of their lives.) It meant working at top speed, and then—worst of all—their work was mercilessly criticized (again that fear of the roadmaster), and they

had to do much of it over again. A certain knack was required to pack the ballast hard under the tie : if it were not done so, the first train over would bear it down and bend the rail.

" You must get on—you must get on," cried Falardeau. " How many ties you done, Co-crane ? How many you, MacTaggert ? "

" Four," said Peter, wiping his sweating face.

" Four," said MacTaggert.

" You must do seven by noon." (It was then about eleven o'clock.) " I don't want to fire you—*non !* but you must do more. . . ."

Only two periods of rest were there : one, the passing of the Eastbound Passenger in the morning ; the other, a Westbound Freight in the afternoon. (The Westbound Passenger—and such a small thing came to matter—passed at night.) How Peter came to long for the throaty scream of the whistle round the curve ! At the first blessed sound he would straighten up, lean on his shovel, and relax deliciously. If only the engine would come to where they were and stop ! But it never did ; rocking and swaying on the unlevelled track, the train roared by, coach by coach, a fleeting glimpse of white faces and weary eyes which cared nothing for the grimy, sweating gang by the side of the track.

The last coach would pass, and even before the roar of it had died away, Falardeau started work again.

" You too slow," he said to Peter. " *Sacré cochon !* if I work like you we be here till Chris'mas ! "

Peter wrapped a handkerchief round his blistered hands. "I'm doing my best."

The foreman's face twisted up. "You must do better. And your friend. Jesus Christ ! if de road-master come . . ."

Peter forced back his anger. He longed to tell the foreman that he would see him and his job in hell first before he would work like a slave. But the bush held him prisoner. Suppose he quit : he had made barely enough money to pay for his food ; he was miles from anywhere ; there was no other job. . . . He worked on with savage energy, forcing the foreman to jump back as he scattered the ballast.

Sunday, when at last it came, was a heartfelt relief. Falardeau and Michaud went into Kapushkassing, where their homes were, leaving the section-house to the other two. They spent the morning in bed, and in the afternoon went to Hearst, borrowing the pump-car—a simple affair propelled by levers—for the occasion. When they arrived, they made at once for White's house, thinking that the railway policeman would be glad to see them ; but to their surprise he never even offered to shake hands.

"Oh, hallo," he said.

There was an awkward pause, then MacTaggert inquired :

"Have you seen anything of Dusty and Jack ?"

"They've quit." (So much for the football team !)

"Oh," said MacTaggert. "Well—good-bye."

"Good-bye." And White closed the door.

Peter shrugged. There was no explaining White's moods. The last lot of bums might still be languishing in the coop—or he might have presented them with a dollar each. Which reminded him that he would repay his debt at the first opportunity. (They were paid fortnightly : the roadmaster bringing out their cheques.)

A very small matter, it may seem—this defection of White's ; hardly worth recording. But it had its effect on the ultimate issue.

Another week went by, and another. But instead of getting better, matters grew steadily worse. The dreadful monotony of it ! One tie—two ties—three ties—four ties. . . . "How many you, Co-crane ? How many you, MacTaggert ?"

Peter began to hate the foreman with all his soul ; and in particular he hated his hat. Falardeau always wore a battered panama with a bootlace—a round, smooth, leather bootlace with two knots in it—tied round the crown ; which gave his head the appearance of bulging. Four times a day, six days a week, on the speeder Peter sat behind this hat, sat quite close to it, his face not more than two feet away. There was something mocking and damnable about it. He longed to bash it with his fist, to see the surprise on the foreman's face—he chuckled inwardly—when the accursed thing was torn from his head. One day, when Falardeau said "How many you, Co-crane :" more than usual, he nearly did hit it. . . .

A definite tension grew in the air ; first between them and the foreman, and then between Peter and MacTaggert ; for Falardeau adopted the cunning plan of setting one against the other. If MacTaggert happened to put in fifteen ties and Peter one less, he would say to Peter : " You be lazee mans. If your frien' can do it, you can." And going home, MacTaggert would maintain an irritating superiority. " You'll have to buck up, you know." The next day, after they had nearly broken their backs, it would be the other way about, and MacTaggert would be the " lazee mans," and Peter would hum lightly, though in his soul he knew he was being petty.

This scheme would hardly have worked out but for the fact that they were already getting on each other's nerves through living too close together. The moment work had finished for the day, and the speeder was put away, Falardeau and Michaud would retire together to their room, talking interminably in French. Michaud was just a nonentity : fat, foolish, good-natured—a trained machine for putting in ties ; but too timid to be sociable if the foreman would not, and certainly flattered at living with such a great man.

So relief from this source was impossible, even if Peter hadn't grown to hate the foreman. They came to know every motion, every thought even, of the other. MacTaggert would stir his tea, round and round, jingle, jingle, against the side of the cup. Then he would take more sugar—as if he couldn't

take enough the first time!—and jingle, jingle, jingle. . . . Peter had to clench his teeth to prevent himself from yelling out at him : “ For God’s sake stop it ! ” And when, after supper, he lighted his pipe and it began to bubble as it always did, he caught sight of MacTaggert’s face in the glass, white and strained, his eyes glaring at the pipe. . . .

They had no privacy ; none at all. Peter knew he should have exercised more self-control to prevent silly little things from getting on his nerves ; but he felt his spirit was going, his self-respect. He didn’t care a damn what happened. Aileen was becoming a far-off dream. What a fool he had been to love her at all ! Marry ! Pauline was more his mark ; and now, not even that. He began to invite rows with MacTaggert. There were fundamental points of difference between them. MacTaggert’s past was obscure, but he made no secret of the fact that he had had a Board School education. Yet being intelligent he had raised himself up. He could quote poetry at tremendous length. Peter could not. He had read widely. Peter had not ; rather reading books which took his fancy over and over again. But Peter looked a gentleman. Once MacTaggert caught him taking a lofty standpoint on some question of taste. Furious words ensued. Peter loathed himself after. MacTaggert was a decent chap—he held on to that : a decent chap. And so he, Peter, had been before this section-gang business had turned him into a sneering swine. He tried to make amends, but MacTaggert was not of a for-

giving nature. They quickly quarrelled again. Miserable, Peter went over it while he laboured at the ties. With curious detachment he saw himself as he used to be : rather a fine fellow, he considered from this distance, moving through life with dignity. Now this quarrel and this job. At School, at College, at Rochester after in his first job, he had got on with people well enough, though occasionally his viewpoint had been a little different from that of the majority. Why couldn't he get on now ? Was he—the truth at last—intrinsically worthless ? The sound of words always appealed to him more than the exact definition of their meanings, which is another way of saying that his brain was more imaginative than mathematical ; and he thought of the phrase : a man of straw—how expressive !—a man of straw. Sweat poured in his eyes. Athletic pursuits are useless as training for manual labour. MacTaggart, with his Board School education, was working jolly fast. . . . He, Peter, who had been to a Public School, ought to have a grasp of mechanical principles. He tried to apply them. MacTaggart was one ahead. MacTaggart was doing specially well this afternoon. Oh God, what a job ! Was there a God ? It didn't seem so. Yet in his extreme youth Peter had proved to himself there was a God by the simple test of praying for something and getting it. He hadn't prayed for years now. And a fat chance he had of starting again now ! God, who must be just, would hardly countenance a man who took up Religion only when he wanted some-

thing. So Religion failed him, or rather, he failed to believe in Religion. He had no philosophy to help him. He couldn't bear discomforts with detachment. Discomforts mattered enormously if one lived through the senses. Peter never thought deeply. He felt. His imagination, constantly working, showed him what might be : a good job, the ability to live the life he was used to. Oh, he was bored—bored. He shoved a tie in and began to work the ballast under. A beastly job. He wiped the streaming sweat from his face. MacTaggert was going steadily ahead. The cursed foreman would be round. He crashed home a couple of spikes and caught Michaud's eye. They both grinned. Michaud would be a merry soul if he had the opportunity.

Peter returned to introspection ; not a cheerful pursuit, for what happy man bothers to look into his own soul ? "Every man finds his own level" was another phrase that came to worry him. What damnable meaning ! This, he supposed, was his level. His face was dark when at last they knocked off work. The moment they were in their room MacTaggert said he wanted to cook his own dinner, and Peter, an inferior cook, could do his own. Peter nearly blazed out. What a man to get along with ! How sociable ! He clenched his hands and controlled himself. "As you like, Mac," he said shortly.

MacTaggert pottered about undressing. He was thin and flat-chested. Peter, bigger in body, stripped more leisurely. His manner as he went to the wash-

basin was subtly eloquent. MacTaggert had told him he was thirty-five. The chap was quite old, and a bit bald.

"When you've finished . . ." said MacTaggert, as Peter splashed about.

But there might not have been an open rupture but for the mosquitoes and black bush flies. They came at the end of May, with the beginning of the really hot weather, and made life in the bush intolerable for a new-comer. They were biting, biting, biting all day long, and though the black flies disappeared at sundown, the mosquitoes buzzed and droned all night. Elaborate screens of fine cheese-cloth over the windows and doors would not keep them away—nothing, it seemed, would keep them away, even smudge fires lighted on the track. Sleep was a few hours' stupor of utter exhaustion just before the dawn; work a nightmare. Buzz, buzz—a moment's silence, then suddenly the maddening sting of a bite. Slap! and the blood-distended little body would burst, leaving a spot of blood.

And always there was the tale of ties.

Men have gone mad in the bush and run screaming through the everlasting green, their hands and faces bitten beyond recognition, bloody and horrible, till at last they ended their torture by plunging in some lake.

Falardeau and Michaud were almost immune. Their skins were tough as leather, and born and bred in the bush, they seemed to present no attraction

for the flies. But Peter's fair complexion was otherwise. When he was sweating from his labour they went for him like little furies. His forehead, neck, and wrists grew corrugated from bites. His temper wore to rags, and so did MacTaggart's, he being bitten in only a slightly lesser degree. They never faced each other without sneering now.

The crisis came one night some two months after they had come on the section. All day they had laboured at the heavy ties, dragging them up the embankment where they had been thrown carelessly off the work train. In addition, they had come to a curve ; and on curves black ties were used. These were impregnated with creosote to preserve them, and weighed about two hundred pounds. It took two men to lift them. When a new one was wanted the foreman and Michaud went down the embankment to fetch it, or Peter and MacTaggart.

Staggering up the steep slope with a tie between them, MacTaggart let an end fall on Peter's foot. Maddened with pain, Peter gave the tie a thrust and pushed MacTaggart in the chest. He watched him topple down the slope : waited with clenched fists while he picked himself up.

Falardeau turned.

" What's de matter with you two ? "

Neither of them answered. They were itching to get at each other's throats.

" Get back to work," ordered the foreman.

MacTaggart was first to obey. Peter watched him with sullen eyes, toyed with the idea of hitting him

till he shook with internal anger, then he, too, returned to work.

They went home without a word to one another. Each cooked his own supper and did his own washing up, though it took much longer that way. MacTaggert stirred his tea continually, adding sugar a little at a time, stirring well between each spoonful, tinkling the spoon against the cup. Never given to examining people intently before, Peter noticed the egregious way his head stuck out at the back ; his receding hair, and nose hooked instead of straight ; thin lips and slightly mincing manner which gave him a falsely well-bred air. He loathed MacTaggert, and without being told, knew that MacTaggert equally loathed him. His supercilious manner—he could convey more by that than Peter could in a dozen words—showed that. It made Peter unhappy to be disliked so ; with the curious sense of detachment he possessed, born of a strong imagination, he saw himself growing worse and worse tempered, being more and more disliked, as life dealt hardly with him. He reacted to environment. Instead of a lonely soul, proud, stern, bearing discomfort with grim patience, single in his aim to get on—which he could well imagine and wished himself to be—he knew he was frail and given to internal shaking anger, which was worse because it had to be kept under some control ; and his “guts,” so proud had he been of them, were barely enough to keep him going. Of the two of them, he had always thought MacTaggert to be the weaker ; but was he, Peter, so much

stronger? He made an effort towards reconciliation, which came to nothing. He thought resentfully that MacTaggert should do something. He was at least older; and he had generous feelings which something could call out. But his manner grew more offensive; and Peter knew he could be more hateful too. He produced his pipe and began to suck it hard so that it bubbled. He saw MacTaggert's face grow tense, and made it bubble more. There was a sharp crack. MacTaggert had flung his teaspoon against the partition.

Still neither spoke a word.

At nine o'clock it began to rain: a steady blinding downpour that deadened all other sound. They heard the door bang as the foreman went out to see that the signal lamp was burning properly, then a few minutes later it banged again as he came back. A mutter of French as he spoke to Michaud, and two thuds as he flung his rubber boots on the floor. After that silence save for the lashing of the rain. Peter placed the lamp beside his bunk and began to read. There was only one book between them: a tattered copy of a cheap thriller, *Buffalo Bill is Baffled*, that some one had left behind. At first it had been a joke: "Got to the part where he is baffled yet, Mac?" Then it had become a shield, a means of defence from the other. They had argued whether they should tear it in half or have it on alternate days. They had decided on alternate days. It was Peter's turn to-day, and soon he was deep in the adventure he had read a score of times before. MacTaggert began to undress.

Several times he looked towards the lighted lamp.
At last he spoke :

" How much longer are you going to read that damned muck ? I want to go to sleep."

Peter made no reply. He turned over another page.

MacTaggert waited a moment, then with a swift movement wrenched the lamp away and blew it out. Peter jumped up and seized his wrist. The next instant all the pent-up emotion of the last weeks broke free and they struggled round and round in the darkness, the furniture crashing.

Dimly Peter heard a banging on the partition and Falardeau's voice : " What de hell's up dere ? "

He took no notice. With fierce joy he knew that MacTaggert hadn't a chance with him physically ; that he could break up his supercilious manner and put him where he belonged. He got him by the throat, and bending him back over a bunk, squeezed savagely. He heard MacTaggert gasp out : " Leave go, you fool ! " and squeezed the harder.

The door opened and Falardeau came in with a candle. " Hey, you mans——" He dived for Peter's legs and dragged him off. Peter wiped his face and sat down slowly on the other bunk. There was silence but for the lashing of the rain.

MacTaggert felt his throat. " Lucky you came in, Falardeau."

" Ye-e-es." The foreman looked at Peter. " You try an' keel your frien', eh ? "

" He started it," said Peter.

Falardeau turned to the door. " You settle it

yourselves, but one of you must go. I want no murder here."

Murder ! Peter felt for his pipe. He had been warned against murdering some one. Extraordinary. It seemed like a nightmare. But no, it was all true. By the light of the candle he could see the foreman's frowning face and Michaud peering fearfully through the door. And over on the other bunk MacTaggert, pale, still panting, his eyes red-rimmed and furious—and he knew that he must look the same.

"Remember—one must go." In his stocking feet the foreman went out and closed the door.

MacTaggert struck a match and lit the lamp. Peter began to rearrange the furniture which had been knocked about in the struggle. He felt bitterly ashamed. He spoke first.

"Look here, Mac," he said. "I'm sorry that happened ; I guess we were both worked up."

"The damage is done," said MacTaggert. "One of us will have to go. We had better toss for it."

"No. You were very decent to me once, and I've not forgotten it, though you may think so. You can have your choice."

"No," said MacTaggert, "we'll toss." He spun a quarter. "Heads I go : tails you."

It came down tails, and Peter started to pack, putting his few possessions in a small suitcase. Now the parting had come he offered to shake hands, but MacTaggert merely shook his head. He wanted no generous Public School gestures here, and Peter, his sense of detachment working, couldn't well blame

him. That caddish issue had been dragged into the limelight, and couldn't be thrust back in a minute. They had quarrelled too deeply to be friends again at once, though Peter, characteristically, remembered all MacTaggert's good points now, and saw nothing wrong in the shape of his head. A day in Hearst, with White to take them out of themselves, or even Dusty and Jack and a football match, might have saved them. It was too late now.

The next morning Peter received his "time" from the foreman. He insisted on paying half for the provisions ; though, as he could take nothing much with him, MacTaggert would have the remainder. Then Falardeau got out the speeder and ran him into Kabina—the nearest point at which the Eastbound train would stop.

Peter watched the panama hat with the bootlace round it bob thrice as the foreman restarted the speeder and receded into the distance. He had tried no Public School gestures here ; he hoped with all his soul that he would never see the foreman again.

Freedom. What a blessed sensation ! For two hours at least he wouldn't be hungry ; he had a few dollars between him and the next bit of slavery which Canada required to give him a bare living. He could come and go as he willed. And yet, strange it may seem, as he stood on the platform at Kabina waiting for the Eastbound, a thought worried him. Shouldn't he have stuck it more ? He actually

envied MacTaggert still working, amid the sweat and the heat and the flies.

Then, as the train came in, he gave up thinking. The sun was shining. New adventures awaited him. Life was worth living.

CHAPTER XVII

IN some blessed states—possibly in Canada at one period of history—a man's labour was so rare and valuable that he performed it with a slight air of condescension, and the employer paid on the nail, eagerly and gratefully. But in Hearst, now, this was not so. True, the railroad paid; but they did it without graciousness, and with no thought for the convenience of section-men. When Peter applied to the roadmaster for his pay he was informed that it would have to come from Cochrane, the divisional headquarters, and that it would take two or three days. His face was quite unmoved as he pronounced the second "Cochrane," and Peter saw nothing to smile at. What was he to do in the meantime? That was no concern of the roadmaster's; and he showed none. But his clerk proved more accommodating. He advised Peter to go to Cochrane and get it, and further, suggested that he should try for work in one of the gold mines in the Porcupine district. So the following evening found him boarding a train for Timbury, one of the biggest towns in the Porcupine gold-mining area, with six dollars in his pocket, all that remained from two months' hard labour after deductions

for provisions and his ticket, two dollars, from Cochrane to Timbury.

It was pitifully little, he had expected far more, certainly twelve dollars he had worked it out to be ; but it was useless to complain or argue. He shouldn't have quit when he did—apparently "quit" was on his report ; technically section-men were rarely fired. So he erased the railroad from his mind and looked forward keenly to seeing Timbury. The magic word "gold" was the lure. His worn boots, the worse for digging, he placed on the opposite seat and gave himself up to the luxury of watching scenery.

Dense bush soon disappeared. It gave way to long rolling hills sparsely covered with scrub, and, more and more frequently after the train had passed Porquis Junction, he noticed the slate-coloured towers of shaft heads and mountainous heaps of "tailings." The lethargy of towns like Hearst and Cochrane, the hanging on to civilization, also disappeared. Population increased. The air was vital with gold and gold mines. The constant topic of conversation was how much to the ton some mine was paying. At South Porcupine a crowd of men got in, and there were familiar references to Teck-Hughes, Dome, Kirkland Lake. A man with a loud voice, sitting just behind Peter, shouted denunciation of a mine manager he confessed to knowing intimately. The double-crosser ! The mine was quoted in T'ronto as paying thirty dollars, and he knew for an absolute fact that the last diamond drilling was worth that much ! His spittle smacked on the floor.

Peter was thrilled. There was still much of the boy in him. These men were miners. This was more like the Canada he had come to see.

Timbury was a thriving town of some eight thousand inhabitants. The mines there had long passed the problematical stage and were prosperous business concerns employing hundreds of men. The Vandervell, one of the largest, compared in size with those of the South African Rand, employing two thousand men underground and another thousand in the mills on the surface. Peter was used by now to the huge scale of industrial operations in Canada, but he paused in wonderment as he walked out of the station and saw the mills of the Vandervell all lit up like another town. Over forty acres of ground they occupied, and formed the entire northern boundary of Timbury. In the still air he could hear the banging of trucks and shrill piping of miniature locomotives—the mine had a railroad of its own. There was a steady faint thudding, felt rather than heard, from the stamps. “Gold—Gold—Gold—Gold—” it seemed to say.

East and west were other mines : the MacIntosh, Gordon-Paymaster, Kendal, Golden Key. By night their lights gleamed bright and sleepless ; by day their grey shaft-heads stood against the sky, and long grey heaps of tailings—waste ore that has had the gold extracted—spread slowly round them and outwards. Timbury was prosperous, well-planned, well-lighted. It had good shops and restaurants. At this time the

streets were full of men who had finished work for the day. Up and down they strolled, shouting and laughing. Here and there were other men going to work on the night shift, intent and silent, each with his miner's lamp and little black dinner-pail. But if Timbury were prosperous it was also very expensive. A meal cost from fifty cents upwards ; a room from a dollar-fifty a day. Peter found his little capital melting away. At a five-and-ten cent store, which he went into just to enter a shop again, he bought a pair of socks. Then he had a good dinner, and found a small Chinese-owned hotel near the station, which nevertheless fixed its prices high. But it had a bath-room, and Peter enjoyed a good hot bath. Afterwards he lay on the bed smoking, savouring to the full the cool room, the absence of mosquitoes. At this rate of living he calculated he could manage for two days. He must get another job by then. But surely he could do that in Timbury.

By eight o'clock the next morning he was at the employment office of the Vandervell ; but even so, there were a dozen men before him ; and by nine there were nearly a hundred more behind ; some chattering and stamping their feet, some glumly silent. Most of them seemed to be British : he caught the broad Scotch accent of the Clyde, the excited sing-song voices of the Welsh, the dark secretive faces and abrupt inflexions of Cornishmen. It was ten o'clock before the employment manager appeared at the door. There was a sudden hush.

"Three muckers wanted," he shouted.

A frantic rush forward and Peter was carried almost up to the door by the fighting, milling throng. Three men—the three strongest—fought their way in, then the door was forced to. It groaned with the weight of bodies pressing against it.

"Nothing more to-day," shouted the manager through an iron grill.

Peter turned away in despair. Even in this "boom" town work was at a premium. He found himself next to a little Scotsman who spat contemptuously in the direction of the employment office. "It's always like this," he said, "——'em ! I've been down here every morning for the last three weeks and not a job yet. And me a married man."

"Is it worth trying the other mines ? "

"No—too late now. I'm going home."

It seemed the only thing to do. The stream of men were joined by others returning from the MacIntosh, the Kendal, the Gordon-Paymaster. Everywhere the tale was the same : Nothing doing to-day.

Peter bought a copy of the *Timbury Courier*, and, as a result of a brief advertisement, applied for a job as delivery boy, but was forestalled by a brawny applicant of thirty-six. That night in his room (another dollar-fifty, his last, paid in advance) he thought hard. "I'm an intelligent man," he told himself ; "what's the most intelligent thing to do ? Apply at seven o'clock at the smallest mine." And he did so, waiting alone, shivering, for the manager. When at last he came, a young man resplendent in breeches and open

shirt, smoking a fragrant pipe, he said, "No—sorry," to Peter's inquiry, as if surprised at being asked. Peter could have cursed him furiously and beaten his face to pulp with his fists. He walked back to Timbury with bowed head. Still his imagination worked, showing him how glorious it would be if he *had* got a job. He was tired, dusty, dishevelled, his clothes torn. A job would mean food, new clothes, comfort. He pulled himself together; had his mane of fair hair, which had grown over his ears and down the back of his neck, cut, free—mangled off would be more the word—by a boy learning to be a barber in a small dive; and went up to the Vandervell long after the others had gone. "No," they said, "sorry—no." At the MacIntosh: "No." The Kendal: "No." The Gordon-Paymaster: "No."

When night came Peter felt he really was at the end of his resources. He didn't know what was going to happen. "I'd be glad of a bed at Wapiti with the mosquitoes," he thought grimly. A light rain was falling. He took shelter in the station entrance, gazing dully at the myriad lights of the Vandervell.

A policeman passed slowly by, glanced at him, and stopped. "Got nowhere to sleep?"

"No."

"Better come with me."

Peter followed him apathetically. Whether or not he was going to be "vagged"—arrested and charged as a vagrant—seemed to matter little. Nothing could be worse than his present position.

In silence the policeman led the way to the station, then ushered him into the charge room.

"Stay there while I fetch the Chief."

Peter sat down. Though the station was comparatively new, the charge-room had already acquired something of the crime and violence that daily passed through it. On the light-brown panelling of the wall behind the desk was a tremendous splash of ink that no amount of soap and water seemed able to erase—a reminder, perhaps, of some "hooch"-maddened malefactor; and the back of one chair was smashed clean out. Over the desk hung a perfunctory portrait of King George, the complexion very pink and the eyes unnaturally blue. In the corner by the door was an ominous-looking four-wheeled chair, provided with powerful straps.

The Chief of Police came in—a huge man, well over six feet, with a red smooth face and receding hair. He looked formidable enough, with a revolver thrust carelessly into a leather holster at his side, but his eyes held a kindly expression.

"What's the trouble?"

"I've nowhere to sleep," said Peter tonelessly, "so the officer brought me here."

The desk creaked as the Chief sat down on the edge.

"Suppose you tell me about yourself."

Peter complied. "Damn it," he ended, with a flash of anger, "I want to work. Surely there's some one in this country who will give me a decent job."

The Chief surveyed him with his light blue eyes. "I'll get you a job at the Vandervell to-morrow, son."

"I've tried there—it's hopeless."

"Not with me. When you know the boss higher up you can do anything. Now I'll tell Boucher—that's the boy who brought you in—to give you some supper, and then you'd better go to bed. I'm afraid you'll have to sleep in the cells to-night, but we'll give you the women's cell—that's the best—and leave the door unlocked, so you'll feel all right."

So for the second time Peter slept in the cells—a free man. About eleven o'clock, when he was just dozing off, there was a scuffling outside, and through the open door he saw some one being propelled violently past. A door clanged, and a key turned. Then a raucous voice uplifted : "Humty, hiddley—" a crash, then a long-drawn out wail, "Oh Gawd. . . ."

A wreck of a man began to snore. Peter, convinced that he looked equally a bum (he had not shaved for two days), thought of his astounding luck. From his warm bed he thanked God : an all-seeing, cosmic presence who engineered him through life, apparently to some purpose. He fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII

PETER realized next day the difference between hunting a job oneself, unknown and without recommendation (a vastly different thing from references given by some firm in the Old Country), and the same process when smoothed by the gentle oil of influence. The same queue was standing outside the employment office of the Vandervell—they were still there six months later, for that matter—but he never went near. Influence ! Influence ! Influence ! that was the way to get work.

A word from Tasker, the Chief of Police, got him an interview with the general manager of the mine, and he was given a job before he had a chance to open his mouth. Indeed, it seemed that Marshall, the general manager, purposely refrained from asking him questions lest he should prove himself utterly and completely impossible !

The honesty in Peter made him worry a bit over this. It seemed damned unfair that he should be given a job in advance of little Scotty with his wife and children. But when he mentioned this to the Chief, the big man looked at him sideways with his light blue eyes and said : “Take what you get in this world, son. He wouldn’t worry about you.” And

Peter said no more. In his heart he knew that of course he would take the job. A year ago he might have made a fine gesture and been willing to starve for his opinions. Now he knew how infernally uncomfortable starving was. It was every man for himself in Canada. If you questioned the goddess of good fortune when she smiled on you, she would think you a sap, a crazy nut, and smile on somebody else.

A sampler he was to be, working underground for five dollars a day. Five dollars—a pound a day, mark you ! It was wealth. Peter was dazed with his luck. But the fickle goddess, having treated him so hardly, now gave the wheel a violent twist in the opposite direction. Tasker took a liking to him, and having secured him a job, invited him down to his house and introduced him to his wife. They had no children. Mrs. Tasker was a good-looking woman of thirty-five or so, with an abrupt, practical manner that masked the kindness of her heart. She was an ideal mate for the Chief, for, as was apparent later, he had his faults, and when off duty was nothing more than a great overgrown boy with a penchant for practical jokes, that seemed badly out of keeping with his office. She was horrified at the state of Peter's wardrobe, and without saying anything to him, dispatched her husband to the stores with instructions to buy a complete outfit ; and in the same abrupt way she told Peter that he could repay them when he had saved some money, so he need not feel under any obligation. He was not expected

to start work till next morning, and after lunch he strolled round the town with Tasker ; and he soon found how powerful a man was the Chief of Police in a town like Timbury. He knew every one, and most wanted to be on good terms with him. The druggists, whose chief business seemed to be the sale of illicit liquor, positively fawned upon him, for they never knew when there would be a raid on their premises and half a dozen cases of whisky or gin taken away, together with fifty dollars by the magistrate next morning.

Drink and politics were the bane of Timbury. They wove in and out the lives of the people like the warp and woof in a multi-coloured garment ; and woe betide a man if his colour clashed with that of a more powerful neighbour ! On one side, broadly, were the reformers, who shouted for prohibition in the letter as in the law, for a "clean-up," and the abolition of booze and wild night parties ; on the other were the "leave well alones," who extolled the virtues of "men as God made 'em, thank the Lord," called the reformers hypocritical humbugs—which in many cases they were—and harried the police with visions of hip flasks and crocks of hooch—fearful products of a province nominally supporting prohibition—disguised as mining machinery. On one occasion, a man introduced half a dozen wooden cases, boldly labelled "Scotch Whisky." His fellow townsmen gathered round them on the station platform, chuckling at his consummate sense of humour—what a joke on the police when they came

to open them!—and making guesses as to what they really contained. They contained whisky. And they were not opened. The police had a better sense of their dignity than that. Tasker himself told Peter about it, and roared with laughter at the joke. A friend of his they met, a Mounted Policeman named Smythe, explained other things. The ramifications of small-town politics were complex in the extreme, for a man donned his opinions as he might an office coat, and shed them as easily. When the Mayor went out of office, which he usually did suddenly after weeks of party warfare, like two dogs growling and snarling elaborately before a fight, all the municipal employees from the Town Clerk and the Chief of Police down to the most humble refuse collector went with him; and by devious processes of graft many jobs in the mines changed hands as well (it was plain to Peter now why Marshall, who was a supporter of Tasker, gave him a job). Each party had its organ: the reformers, the *Courier*; the leave-well-alones, the *Eagle*. A clever skit or slashing denunciation would be carried round and exhibited for days (both papers were weeklies) until the opposing editor had racked his brains to some effect and produced something still more scurrilous. The law of libel, be it added, was considered merely as the last refuge of a man too weak to hit back in kind.

It will be seen, then, how precarious was Tasker's tenure of office. But most surprising to Peter, after a few days of Timbury society, was that the present mayor (who ostentatiously owned the Temperance

Hotel) was a reformer. What the leave-well-alones would be like was a matter of conjecture.

Tasker happened to drop in at the *Eagle* office on a matter of business, and Peter was introduced to the reporter, sub-editor, and printing staff, one Billiter, who showed quite remarkable talent in ferreting out the dark secrets of the reformers.

"Very decent chap, the Chief," he said to Peter, when Tasker had gone in to the editor; then, in the same tone: "We'll have him out by the ears at the next election." He reached for a sheet of flimsy. "Read this. . . . Pretty strong, eh?" as Peter exclaimed at the fiery sentences. It appeared that the Chief was not only grossly incompetent—a mere puppet of an equally incompetent mayor—but a villain of the very deepest dye; and it would be a praiseworthy act on the part of any public-minded citizen of Timbury to shoot him in the back.

"He's a good little chap, Billiter," said the Chief, when, after reading also the account of himself and slapping the author good-humouredly on the back, he led the way into the street; "he knows more about this town than any one else in it. Wish we had him on the *Courier*. Now we'll collect my old Dutch and a couple of crocks, and go off to a party. I'll get you back in plenty of time for the mine to-morrow."

Peter could only wonder. He thought, though, that the Chief would take the *Eagle*'s efforts to turn him out of office more seriously. The truth was that Tasker simply did not worry. It was one of his mis-

fortunes that his work depended on small-town politics, and he had to make the best of it. Apart from that, he knew his own worth ; he was the best Chief of Police Timbury had ever had so far as the actual suppression of crime was concerned, and he felt he could afford to take risks in other directions. Whether or not he was justified was to be seen.

Social life in Timbury—which meant night life, for every one was at work during the day—was made up of “crocks” and parties ; and these were arranged on a wholesale scale. People moved together or not at all. Gangs of a score or more would rush from one house to another, drinking out each in turn ; then, when the dawn came, a procession of cars would race over to Crescent City; a barren collection of shacks some ten miles out, for eggs and bacon—headlights glaring, dipping and swerving, shouts and laughter as some rival was forced into the ditch. Many a car remained there with bent wings and buckled wheels, to be removed blasphemously next day by a twenty-dollar-a-week mechanic. But what matter ? The mines were paying big dividends. Timbury was booming. Timbury was built on gold. And the men at the top were prosperous, whatever the muddy undercurrent of unemployed might be like. They were little gods, shedding little god-like golden streams, that yet were curiously local in their falling. Daily there were rumours : “ Say, they’ve just opened a new vein in the MacIntosh. . . . Yeah, you can see the naked

gold running through the quartz . . . pick it out with a knife . . ." And the men in the queues pressed a little closer to the door, as far away from the intoxicating glitter as a bank clerk is from the thousands of dollars that pass through his fingers. The stamps shook the ground. "Gold—Gold—Gold—Gold." The lights of Timbury blazed at night like those of a great city. Whisky, rum, gin, flowed like water. Prostitutes thronged the sidewalks, their eyes slippery as ice, sliding from face to face. There were certain houses, certain whole streets.

Peter's introduction to social life in Timbury was as sudden as his other experiences. About nine Tasker took out the big police touring car, put up the hood, and with his wife and Peter and a young married couple—introduced briefly as "Sadie and Jack from the Gordon-Paymaster"—inside, drove to a drug store. The proprietor himself came out, his mind plainly exercised as to whether the raid was official or unofficial. As he saw it was the latter, he put the best face possible on it, and brought out a big earthenware jar, which was quickly hidden under the front seat; then the car drove to a large house in Tenth Avenue. (All the streets in Timbury were numbered, not named.) Who was his host, or what he looked like, Peter never knew.

When they arrived, the big living-room was already crowded with people, all of them with a glass in their hand—some one in each. The entry of the

Chief was greeted with uproarious applause. Men came forward to shake his hand and slap him on the back. One woman, with black Indian-looking eyes and incredible blonde hair, flung herself round his neck and kissed him. Tasker promptly lifted her upside down and held her above his head, grinning like a great overgrown boy.

"Al!" said Mrs. Tasker sharply; and, grinning, he put the girl down.

The evening passed like a dream to Peter. He had neither seen nor imagined anything quite like it before. A dance and two drinks ; that was the order. Sometimes they danced to the radio ; sometimes the phonograph ; sometimes both together. Conscientiously he whirled round perspiring women, fat, thin, pretty, ugly, who left him at the end of each dance with an abrupt "'Yu," and made a dash for the buffet, where the bottles were arrayed, every one, apparently, having made a contribution. Many of them were English born, and the social freedom that Canada gave them seemed to have gone to their heads. One girl in particular Peter noticed : her eyes large and languorous, her voice clear and penetrating as a bell. "Simply stinkin'—simply too stinkin' for words." It ran through the evening like a refrain. He kept his thoughts to himself, and sat on a couch beside Mrs. Tasker, who, glass in hand, gave him a thumb-nail sketch of every one she knew. Her reserve had vanished.

"That's Banks, the captain of transportation at the Kendal ; he's dancing with the wife of the town

clerk. . . . That fat dame there is Mrs. Pond—did you ever see such legs? When she's drunk enough she'll begin to tell stories—you wait, it's the funniest thing you know. . . . That girl with the frizzy hair will drink gin till she's sick. . . ."

She ceased suddenly. Her head lolled over against his shoulder and she slept. Peter moved uncomfortably. Suppose Tasker should come in. . . .

The door opened suddenly and the Chief appeared, his face very flushed. He crossed the room in great bounds that shook the floor. "How's she going?"

"Oh—pretty well, thanks." Peter felt he was damn ungrateful to be bored. At that moment Mrs. Tasker's head slipped and fell across his lap. Tasker did not seem to notice.

"You want to get liquored up, boy." He thrust a glass into Peter's hand. Peter drank the neat gin. The taste was sweet and sickly. His stomach seemed to rise and fall and rise again till he was floating with it somewhere near the ceiling. He heard Tasker's voice: "We're going to have a game of strip poker—come and watch."

Capturing his stomach by an effort and forcing it down, he followed the Chief into another room, where half a dozen men and women were seated round a table, while more looked on. Cards were dealt, and the betting started. One man bet his coat, a girl opposite raised him with her shoes and stockings, a third solemnly pledged his braces. So it went on till finally the pot was called and the winner piled on a motley collection of clothing,

mASCULINE AND FEMININE, WHILE THE LOSERS SAT DENUDED OF A CORRESPONDING AMOUNT. ONE GENTLEMAN—THE TOWN CLERK—SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN WINNING CONSISTENTLY, FOR ROUND HIS NECK WERE DRAPED TWO PAIRS OF SILK STOCKINGS, A LADY'S DRESS, AND A COAT; WHILE A STOUT LADY OPPOSITE, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE HIS WIFE, SEEMED TO HAVE LOST WITH EQUAL FACILITY, FOR SHE SAT HUMPED UP IN HER UNDERWEAR. IT WAS HARD TO SAY WHICH WAS MOST ANNOYED: SHE BECAUSE SHE KNEW HER FIGURE WAS NOT THE KIND TO STAND FURTHER REVELATION; HE BECAUSE THE CLOTHES WOULD BE BOUGHT BACK BY THEIR OWNERS AT THE END OF THE GAME, AND HE HAD TO PAY HIS WIFE'S DEBTS.

ANOTHER HAND CAME TO AN END. THERE WAS A ROAR OF LAUGHTER AS THE WIFE OF THE TOWN CLERK HAD HER WORST FEARS REALIZED. WITH FLUSHED FACE AND FURIOUS EYES SHE PAID HER DEBT, THEN GRABBED A PILE OF CLOTHING FROM HER HUSBAND AND SCURRIED OUT OF THE ROOM.

DAWN WAS BREAKING WHEN PETER HALF LED, HALF CARRIED MRS. TASKER OUT OF THE HOUSE. IN THE EAST THE SKY SEEMED TO BULGE DOWNWARDS, LIKE A SOFT RED BALLOON. AFTER THE GIN-LADEN ATMOSPHERE OF THE HOUSE THE AIR WAS INEXPRESSIBLY SWEET.

SHE SAT DOWN UNSTEADILY ON THE RUNNING BOARD OF THE CAR.

"WHERE'S MY OLD MAN, PETER? HE MUSTN'T BE FOUND IN THERE."

"I'LL FIND HIM."

HE WENT INSIDE THE HOUSE AGAIN. IT WAS SILENT NOW. THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR OF THE DINING-ROOM HE SAW

the two men still struggling feebly. A girl was asleep on the stairs. She stirred as he passed and tried to catch his ankle. "Snap," she murmured, and giggled foolishly. He searched systematically till he came to the bathroom, and found Tasker lying in the bath, the whole sixteen stone of him, his head between the taps. Truly, the high gods can come to earth ! Peter was conscious of the irony of the situation, but he felt also a rush of pity and affection for this huge man who had befriended him so royally.

"Time to go, Chief," he said.

"That you, Pete?"

Tasker opened red-rimmed eyes a fraction, peered, then closed them again and began to snore. Peter got him under the armpits and heaved—Heavens, what a weight he was!—but found it impossible to move him. Erratic footsteps sounded outside. Peter recognized the young man, the manager at the Golden Key, who had turned him down. He was very drunk.

"I want you," said Peter abruptly; then as the other staggered in: "Come and help me here. Take his legs."

"But, ol' man——"

Peter was curt with him, and was glad of the opportunity. "His legs," he repeated.

The other bent obediently, and together they got the Chief downstairs and out to the car. Ten minutes in the fresh air revived him a little, and he was able to take the wheel. As they passed slowly and erratically on to the road, a clock in the town struck five,

the notes hanging in the air then coming towards them in little handfuls, as if they were leaping and bumping over the broken ground.

Peter yawned dismally and closed his eyes. He wished he hadn't to go to work at seven.

CHAPTER XIX

A GOLD mine has a personality of its own, comparable to that of a ship ; and just as surely it acquires a reputation : a happy or unhappy mine, a lucky or unlucky mine, a mere dispassionate hole in the ground for so many men to labour in, extracting so much gold, or a place of weird, uncanny happenings : sudden rises of water, falls of rock, spontaneous combustion of waste material, and just "accidents"—a killer.

There were three shafts in the Vandervell and over fifty miles of workings underground. Day and night the mills worked, stopping only once a year, and that on Christmas Day. To maintain the huge output—some five thousand tons of ore passed through daily—there were three shifts : morning, afternoon, and graveyard—the night shift. Peter was on the morning shift.

At a quarter to seven, feeling desperately tired (he had had about an hour's sleep, then been roused), he made his way to the sample house, and in company with some thirty other men received a bag of moils—chisels with pointed ends instead of cutting edges—a quantity of little white bags, a hammer, and a tin of carbide. In a gold mine a miner's lamp is acetylene,

not electric, and he has to provide it himself. Then, as the five-to-seven whistle blew, they made their way to the Central shaft, a tremendous erection of wooden bulks covered with corrugated iron, great grooved wheels, and greasy black cables, which, however prosaic it may sound, had an effect at once grim and bizarre.

They joined the crowd waiting to go down.

Most were glumly silent, impenetrable in black oilskins and sou'westers worn as a protection against the water. Now and then a man would cough, and as if at a signal others would start until a dozen or more were hacking and spitting. Silicosis—hardening of the lungs—is the scourge of gold mines. The fine rock dust penetrates everywhere, and after ten years of it a man's lungs get hard as a board. To their credit, it should be said, mine executives have tackled the problem in earnest, with more and more improved ventilation and X-ray tests, and a man is usually removed before his condition becomes dangerous; whereas formerly he worked on till he was useless, and came out only to die.

In a few minutes the cage came up packed with men off the graveyard shift. Blinking at the sunlight, they stepped out to the changing rooms, and the day shift crowded in, nine at a time, the steel cage, dripping with water like everything else, dancing up and down ever so slightly, like a mechanical toy at the end of a piece of elastic. Then the cageman swung to and barred the door, a bell clanged—the signal to the hoistman—and down they went.

Forty—fifty—sixty miles an hour !

Peter gasped at the speed of descent. His stomach felt as if it were shooting up through his throat. The cage began to rattle and sway, and the lights of the thousand-foot level shot by in a stream of fire.

“ Pretty—fast ? ” He meant to speak casually to Wilder, the “ straw-boss,” or little boss, of the samplers.

Wilder was staring stolidly before him. He turned a pair of blue eyes, bright and liquid as a woman’s.

“ You’ll get used to it,” he said.

Abruptly the cage slowed.

“ Fourteen—fifty,” chanted the cageman. “ Next stop—two thousand.”

Three men got out, then the cage went on again. At the three thousand-foot level, the lowest in the mine, the straw-boss nudged Peter, and he too got out, just in time to save himself from the disgrace of being sick.

The level station was as big as a London tube station and brilliantly lighted by electric lamps suspended from the roof, which gave a fantastic and fairy-like effect. Water dripped everywhere ; the grey rock of the walls glistened with it ; it fell in a steady stream from the network of pipes and cables overhead, and slushed away into gutters, from where it was drawn out of the mine by powerful electric pumps. On all sides dark tunnels opened out —dark, that is, compared to the brilliant glare of the station, for they were illuminated at regular intervals, giving a further resemblance to a tube station. The

cross-cuts ran east and west ; off them, north and south, the drifts ; while stopes, tunnelling up in a zigzag, connected one level with another. Each tunnel was provided with a single track and overhead electric trolley wires like a tramway, and along these the ore-cars were drawn to the tipplers, where they were turned completely over, and the ore emptied into skip buckets which carried it to the crusher mills on the surface. If the cage was fast, the skips were faster still. Peter was standing by the shaft, lighting his lamp, when there was a "wo-o-o-sh" behind, and a skip bucket tore up in a smooth, high rush at a hundred miles an hour. He had a swift glimpse of a man standing in the empty bucket—*standing in the bucket*. In a month he felt able to do the same thing himself.

A sampler's work takes him to every part of the mine. Using his hammer and moil, he chips off samples of the rock in each cross-cut, drift, and stope, noting the exact position ; and they are sent up to the analysts in the laboratory on the surface, who work out the percentage of gold they contain. It is then known how many dollars to the ton the mine is paying in any particular spot.

As a new man, Peter was paired off with an old-timer, one Jock McClure, to show him the work, and put in the development section. There was a reason for this ; a man's honesty had to be tested. At one time high-grading—stealing nuggets from the rich, high-paying sections—was rife, and the company

lost thousands of dollars annually. Men would smuggle the gold out, concealed in their clothing, their ears—one hit on the highly ingenious system of secreting lumps of it in the bottom of his lamp in place of the spent carbide. And once clear of the mine it was easily disposed of. Syndicates established themselves in the town, putting their own confederates underground where possible, or bribing some mucker or sampler with the lure of easy wealth. Then measures were put in force. The men were watched by trained mine detectives as they left the shaft-house, and heavy penalties imposed for taking souvenirs—the usual euphemistic defence put up when caught.

Naturally Peter knew nothing of this, and the straw-boss told him nothing. After Jock McClure had marked out his samples for him, he chipped away at the wet grey rock with occasional white quartz stringers running down it ; while Jock retired to take some samples in a drift a hundred yards away. It was rather eerie, working alone by the light of a flickering acetylene flame, a mile underground. The air was pleasantly cool—the temperature of the mine varied little, winter or summer—and quite quiet. Only in the distance sounded the muffled pulsating drum of a pneumatic drill working aloft in some stope ; and now and again there would be a dull boom, the rocky floor quivering slightly with the concussion, and a blast of air would sweep down the tunnel, blowing out his lamp. Queer echoes thrummed and sang in the darkness as he fumbled to relight it. Once a thick Swedish voice, startlingly

loud : “ . . . yeah, by Chris’ . . . two dollar . . . I joost. . . . ” When at length he found a match and struck it, holding it up and peering round, there was no one there. Look where he would there was no one there. . . .

At eleven o’clock, Baldock, the boss of the samplers—and a very high god indeed—came up and stood behind Peter, watching silently. At length he spoke : “ Technical man, aren’t you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Know anything of chemistry or metallurgy ? ”

“ I took them at College.”

Baldock said nothing more. But the result of the interview appeared later ; for at noon, when they were having dinner in a little wooden shack near the level station—none of the men went on top in the middle of the day—the straw-boss spoke to Peter.

“ You seem to have made a hit with Baldock—he says you’re to be moved round till you see everything there is.”

Peter began to hope.

There was no slave-driving in the mine—at any rate, with the samplers. They were expected to cut forty feet of samples a day, and this was easily done by three o’clock. Dinner was more than so much eating and drinking : it was a social event lasting from an hour to an hour and a half, where a man could air his opinions and listen to those of others. They were a curious collection of men, the samplers ; not one of them had ever been in a mine before.

The muckers, blasters, and machinemen were professional miners, many of them French-Canadians, others immigrants who had worked in the mines of the world, the coal mines of the British Isles, the copper and silver mines of Russia and Central Europe. But the samplers were recruited from other trades, though there was no logical reason why this should be so. Jock McClure had been a professional football player before he emigrated to Canada ; two men were ex-postmen ; another was a baker, another an undertaker ; a tall thin man, with a noble brow and the lower part of his face a ruin, was a doctor of philosophy who had come to grief in the management of his own life and now kept up an intimate friendship with rye whisky. There were half a dozen students working their way through the University, in the usual American manner. All contributed something. Now and again the doctor came to life with a crushing rejoinder, but he didn't trouble much. They had too much of what he lacked—vitality. Peter was content mostly to listen. Jock McClure, a self-educated, and therefore highly educated, man, was a great talker. He was a good example of the colonizing genius of the Scotch race. He had recently been made a School Inspector in Timbury, and was never tired of commenting on the forwardness of lassies. Without exception they used powder and lip-stick. At the beginning of the class the teacher would produce her compact and powder her nose and rouge her lips ; and gravely each child would follow suit.

"R-r-ruinous to their morals and character," said Jock.

At once the students engaged him in battle. English girls were too soft ; they didn't paint or pet ; they would blush if you looked at them. But when they did fall—oh boy ! Whop ! A Canadian girl wanted to know all about life before she fell for the wedding-bell stuff. And Englishmen were the same way. Why, they knew less at twenty-five than the average Canadian did at sixteen !

The students turned challenging eyes on Peter ; and he proceeded to defend what they called Knights of the Round Table stuff and boloney about chivalry. A young man named Minter took him up. "I'll tell you," he said, "some of the girls must have been darn lonely in those days sitting on their pedestals. I suppose you would take a girl out all day, give her a swell time, and spend a lot of dough, and get nothing in return but a little light conversation : "

"Well, why not ? "

"Why not ! Do you think the girl will like you for it ? No, sir ! She'd think you a sap—and she'd be right."

Peter grew warm.

"Have you ever been to Winnipeg ? You should see Portage Avenue on a Sunday evening : dozens of cars crawling by the curb. They'll pick up a girl, take her about ten miles out, then stop. And if she won't give them what they want they will make her walk home. I've seen some of them coming back late at night. I doubt if they would run down chivalry."

"That may be," said Minter, "but in the first place it's their own fault for being picked up, and if they are out for all they can get—and most of them are—they won't run round with you if you give them a wet time—we have to be too."

"Yes. But if she won't kiss you, at least drive her home."

"And let her put one over you? I don't see why."

Peter opened his mouth, then shut it again. He could hardly ask Minter how he would have his own sister treated.

But he soon saw that Minter did himself very much less than justice. Where no question of sex was involved, there was no more chivalrous man. In broad daylight, amid hundreds of miners, he helped an old woman to push a heavy cart of laundry to the bunkhouse, and seemed to think there was nothing out of the ordinary in his action. Again, when Peter happened to pay a visit to his bunkhouse, there was a skunk, most unpleasant of animals, on the front steps; and rather than let a friend of his be squirted, Minter came out to warn him and received the objectionable discharge himself. Not many people, Peter realized, would have done that.

He was sorry when Minter and the other students went away. He liked them, and it seemed that they liked him. A surprising amount of information they had given him in the lunch-time talks; and they found out that, when you knew him, an Englishman needn't necessarily be standoffish to the point of boredom. Peter was lonely when they left.

The bunkhouses, where he had moved in after the second night with the Taskers, provided some companionship. They were another school for the study of human nature. There was an air of permanency about them—permanency of the occupants, that is, that had been lacking at Fort Alexander. Some of the men had been living there for years. Many were Welsh or Cornish—the latter called “Cousin Jacks,” because they all seemed to be related to one another ; and after supper they would pass away the long summer evenings singing quartets, the little groups huddling close together, faces inwards.

“ Abide with me,
Fast falls the even-tide . . . ”

The voices, in perfect harmony, brought out a loneliness and melancholy that went to Peter’s heart. It made him homesick for English scenes. He wasn’t, after all, a Canadian yet.

He began to know most of them by sight, and then by name. It was customary for a man to leave the door of his cubicle ajar if he were “at home,” and he moved round the bunkhouse in this way, becoming friendly first with one and then another. Then suddenly this pleasant state of affairs ceased. When one evening he called on Graves, an elderly man who seemed to have worked in every mine in the world and could talk interestingly of his experiences, he turned away and spat with insulting deliberation on the floor.

“ What’s the matter ? ” said Peter directly.

Graves picked up a rubber boot and began preparations to patch it.

" You must be excusing of me," he said, " I'm rather busy."

Peter was bewildered, but he said no more, and at the first opportunity mentioned it to Jock McClure.

" I've heard rumours," said Jock. " Where did you go last night ? "

" To see Tasker, the Chief of Police. I haven't seen him for a week."

" Well, last night the bunkhouses were raided for booze, and some one saw you coming out of Tasker's house. The boys think you're spotting for him."

" Spotting ? "

" Spying. Finding out where the booze is hidden."

" Nonsense," said Peter sturdily. " I shouldn't do a thing like that."

He knew there was a considerable amount of drinking going on in the bunkhouses, but it did not concern him, and he had never spoken of it to Tasker, nor had Tasker ever referred to it.

" I know you wouldn't," said Jock. " But when you work in a mine like this, it doesn't do to be too friendly with a policeman unless you want to be misunderstood."

" What can I do about it ? "

" I'll pass the word round that you're square."

But in spite of Jock's efforts the old state of affairs never returned. When Peter went in to see Graves again and sat down on the end of his bed for a yarn, the old man was perfectly polite, but he never related

any more of his adventures, and sooner or later he would pick up something that required mending.

"Dear Aileen," wrote Peter, and paused, gazing through the window of his cubicle at the top of the Central shaft. The wheels, he noticed, had begun to revolve. He turned again to his letter. "I meant to have written before this, but have been so busy. . . ." Again he paused and scratched idly with his pen, knowing he must write the letter, but finding it difficult to compose. He wanted her so badly, yet what could he say? Had he achieved the splendid ideal he had set himself?

He was lonely. The mine had become a mere background to existence. At first work had been everything. To have a steady job again, a job it was possible to hold without breaking one's heart, seemed all he required. Sometimes when the memory of those awful days hunting for work came back, he would work at frantic speed, piling up credit between him and possible discharge. Then inevitably he got used to it. Cutting samples in the cross-cuts, where he was at present, was quite simple and uneventful. He came off shift at three o'clock—sometimes half-past two. Time was then his own. It had begun to drag. None of Tasker's friends appealed to him much; and there was no one else.

Wandering round the interminable scrub that surrounded Timbury, he composed a letter, a passionate letter, to Aileen, full of glowing enthusiasms, as if everything was solved now and they had only

to fall into each other's arms. He knew now that he loved her ; and it seemed that she loved him too.

But when he came to write the letter he paused. Wasn't he taking a tremendous amount for granted ? What, after all, had he to offer ? Five dollars a day, true—a magnificent sum. He had repaid his debt to Tasker and opened a bank account. But he was still a glorified labourer—a man who worked with his hands. And for all its apparent laxity, there was a line of demarcation in the mine : the men who were paid monthly, the permanent staff, mine captains, analysts, and so on, occupied separate quarters ; and if they were not keenly aware of the difference, their wives were. A sampler's job was not one he could marry on—at least to a girl like Aileen.

So he suppressed the burning sentences, or rather averted them ; asking how she was, Ruth, the office, and telling a little—a very little—about his work, and much more about Timbury.

Five days later the answer came. Eagerly Peter tore open the envelope. Then gradually his face fell. She was glad he was getting on well. . . . Ruth was married, quite suddenly, to some one in the office. . . . Winnipeg was just the same. . . . Mr. Cantrell had succeeded in eluding her once, and had actually gone into the street with his office coat on. . . . She was " yours very sincerely."

Slowly Peter folded the letter up. He didn't know quite what he had expected. He only knew that he was bitterly disappointed. It was like going into a

room expecting a warm welcome, and finding the fire out and no one there.

For some time he sat smoking on the bunkhouse steps. A little group of Cornishmen were singing. One great black-bearded fellow was booming forth in a deep bass, wild and desolate, as if he were alone on the summit of a mountain. Suddenly he took a step forward and raised his arms, shaking them in intolerable agony. His voice thundered against the monotonous thudding of the stamp mills, as if striving to beat them down into silence.

Peter heard voices behind :

" . . . Black Jack at it again . . . crazy as a loon."

" Yeah, his brother was killed ten year back when the rope of the cage broke."

Abruptly the giant Cornishman was silent. For a moment he stood brooding, then went striding away, his arms jerking and swinging. The mills went on with steady persistence : " Gold—Gold—Gold—Gold."

Peter got up from the steps and went inside to change his clothes. Tasker had told him there would be a party on at the Gordon-Paymaster that night. It would be a wild affair—wild, with plenty of drink going. . . .

CHAPTER XX

THE outstanding characteristic of Audrey Thomas was her extraordinary matter-of-factness. Peter had been introduced to her earlier in the evening by an excited little woman in green. "Such a nice boy—English, you know—charming—rather lonely in all this crowd (evidently this referred to Audrey)—you two . . ." Then, before he could say a word, she had been jerked off to the upper regions of the house "to see the fur coat I bought from Alex."

He saw her now standing against the window, gazing at Tasker and another giant who were engaged in seeing how high they could throw the blonde girl from the Kendal, as if throwing girls in the air was something quite ordinary. But for a certain vagueness of personality, she would have been the most striking girl in the room. She was tall, slim, beautifully proportioned; her features had a slight air of haughty disdain, but the expression did not reach her eyes, which were brown and lustrous—but just eyes, with no apparent feeling in them.

When the blonde girl finally hit the ceiling and put an abrupt end to the game, she still gazed thoughtfully; then quite suddenly she smiled. . . .

Peter went over to her. "And how do you like Timbury?"

"Oh, very well—I've often seen you in the High Street."

"Seen me?"

"Yes. I'm staying with an aunt, and her flat looks over the High Street. You always seem in a terrific hurry."

"Man of affairs," said Peter.

She looked up at him, and again quite suddenly she smiled. There was a little silence.

"I'm married," she said. "My husband is a pilot on the St. Lawrence. It's best to get that over, isn't it?"—as if marriage were a kind of rice pudding.

Peter did not know what to say. He was, in truth, surprised. She had been introduced simply as Audrey Thomas, and it hadn't occurred to him to look at her left hand. He would never have thought she was married; she hadn't the air. She seemed too young, too detached, like a solitary craft launched on the ocean, to drift as the fates pleased and be taken in tow by the first that happened along. She seemed as solitary as he was.

There was another silence. Peter felt he did not shine as an entertainer, but it seemed somehow that Audrey (it was impossible to think of her as Mrs. Thomas) did not want to be entertained. She was content just to be there.

"Very warm in here," he said at last.

"It is rather."

"Let's go outside on the balcony."

They went outside and stood against the rail. The night was suffocatingly hot. Clear and bright, and sharp-edged as a gold coin, the moon was rising over the low hills to the left. Here and there among the blackness of scrub were a few scattered lights in the form of a rough V—few, because the Gordon-Paymaster was on the extreme eastern boundary of Timbury. Behind, through the closed french windows—very far away, it seemed—came the murmur of voices, a sudden shriek of laughter, then a heavy crash and the sound of breaking glass. Too detached to comment on.

Peter looked down at Audrey. What on earth was she doing here?

Her eyes met his, and brighter still in the moonlight, they were no longer expressionless: they were alive with passion. Her face had weakened, as though seen through a mist. She made a curious little ingratiating movement towards him.

He bent suddenly and kissed her. The next minute she was in his arms, utterly submissive. He kissed her again and again. She lay quietly. One hand rested on his shoulder, with that touch of matter-of-factness, as if it were just a convenient place to put it.

Twelve o'clock struck. They must have been out there an hour.

"We had better go in," said Peter.

She nodded, and began to rearrange her hair. If

he had suggested staying out all night she would have nodded in just the same way.

Peter felt this. . . . He made no move. He stared over the balcony, restless and dissatisfied. He wanted more than kisses. Manual labour, good food again, the clean, bracing air of Timbury, had given him a strength to glory in. Conscious of a want, he had tried to tire his strength by cutting his samples at a most furious rate. He was like a young god—and lonely.

"I'm sorry you're married," he said abruptly.

"It doesn't make any difference." Her tongue was suddenly loosened. "Anderson, my husband, and I don't get on. He's kind. A leathering would do me good sometimes. It might bring me to my senses. I met him on his holiday, and mother wanted me to marry him. We're always quarrelling. But he only threatens and apologizes after. I never do."

Poor Audrey !

Peter felt the tragedy of it. "He's kind." An elderly husband cowed by the haughty disdain that never came from her soul, bribing her with presents, then futilely angry and threatening, then apologizing and bribing again ; when a man of ruder instincts would have secured her devotion.

Unconsciously he caught her arm, and she leaned towards him with that maddening submission. "If I like a man," she said, "he can do anything he likes to me." Her breathing quickened ; he felt the warmth of it on his cheek.

Peter buried his face in her hair, letting the subtle fragrance of it submerge his senses. If he thought any more of the rights and wrongs he would think himself out of happiness. He knew this. Yet Aileen, with her proud standards, her fearless belief in the discipline of the body, came back to haunt him. Her letter, poor comfort, was in his pocket. He should show his strength and pride, and thrust Audrey from him. But he was fiercely tempted. He didn't exalt her, but she represented Woman. He wanted love. It was a necessity to him. His arms tightened about her. He kissed her again passionately. "Dear . . ." she murmured. Her hand strayed to his hair, stroking softly. Her wedding ring touched his cheek. That stung him. The husband, poor devil, loved her. And what was he, Peter, proposing to do ? He tried to ignore the ring, and could not. To him, looking at himself with detached interest, came another Peter : a compassionate one. He was a rotten sort of Lothario when it came to the point. He could only love his own. In a blinding flash the meaning of true love came to him, the completeness of body and spirit. And his body, unsatisfied, was forced back.

He stood away from her. "Go in," he said, and this time opened the door.

"Yes, dear."

"Yes, dear"—damn her !

"Just in time," said Tasker as they entered the room. "We're all going over to Crescent City."

Peter, hot, flushed, who had intended to go home, changed his mind. "Will you let me drive?"

"Why, sure, if you want to."

He turned to Audrey. "You had better go home. We'll go through the High Street and drop you."

"But I'd rather go with you."

"You'll do as you're told." Peter spoke with deliberate, outrageous brutality. Perhaps that would shake her out of her confounded submission; make her flare up in a passion and leave him. But no, she only slipped her hand in his and held it tightly. After three years with a man who humbled himself before her, she craved violence. It was Peter's abrupt manner that had attracted her. If he had threatened to beat her she would have fetched the whip.

In the car she snuggled up against him, pressed the closer by another girl on her other side. With a fur collar about her soft brown hair she was enchantingly, maddeningly beautiful. Peter drove with compressed lips, half regretting his decision. He was only human. He was wild with desire to kiss her again. His body was not so easily beaten. . . . "Fool," it said bitterly.

He heaved the car round a corner.

"There you are—No. 10, where that lamp is." It was the little woman in green who spoke. "Good-night, Audrey dear." Peter pulled up with a jerk. He said nothing, and leaning across, opened the door. He felt the fingers on his arm tighten and then relax. He did not look. The next moment she was on the pavement.

"Such a nice girl. . . ."

"Seemed struck on you, Pete," said Tasker from the back seat.

Peter turned over his shoulder. "How much will this car do, Chief?"

"Seventy,"

"We'll make her do it."

He swung back on to the main road out of the town, and they were joined by a pair of blazing headlights that he knew belonged to Gay Barford's new Packard. She was the daughter of the manager at the Kendal, and had the reputation of being a most furious driver. They would have a race. Peter had only driven a little Rover Eight before in England, and the heavy American-built police car swerved badly before he grew accustomed to the left-hand steering. But somehow he managed to hold it.

"Be careful, Peter," cried Mrs. Tasker, as he slithered round a corner at thirty-five.

Peter threw up his handsome head, exulting in the thrill of the big engine, the sense of limitless power, the rush of air on his hot face, the mad plunge into the darkness. Damn Audrey and his qualms of conscience about her! Yes, and Aileen and her infernal coolness! Love was a lot of rot, anyway.

The lights of the Packard crept up behind him. Drew level. He yelled something primeval and derisive at the slim figure at the wheel, and received a glance from a pair of insolent eyes. He pressed his foot down hard on the accelerator, and they dropped

behind. Fifty—fifty-five—sixty—sixty-five. . . .
The needle quivered round the speedometer.

“Peter!”

Another corner loomed up with the suddenness of a brick wall. Peter swerved the car round. The Packard, slightly behind, swerved too; but there was not room enough for both. He heard the shrill scream of brakes and pulled in violently to the right.

“Stop, Peter, stop. She’s turned over.”

Peter stopped. He was quivering inwardly, but outwardly his face was calm. “Anything happened?” he asked.

“Better turn round,” said Tasker.

Peter turned awkwardly, grating the gears. Suppose Gay Barford were killed. . . . But no, her car was only ditched. With relief he saw her leather-coated figure at the side of the road. She was calmly lighting a cigarette. Round her, complimenting her nerve, was a little group of men, the cream of society in Timbury. Pete stepped out.

“Oh, hallo,” she said. “You’ll have to give us a tow.” Her eyes lingered on Peter. “But for that corner I would have beaten you. But you don’t drive badly.”

Peter ignored her and bent to fix a tow-rope. He wasn’t going to join the complimentary chorus. He uncoiled the tow-rope with a crash. Gay was bent on another conquest. He wouldn’t fall into line. She was a kind of golden girl in a golden town. Round her fluttered a little crowd. He wouldn’t be one of them. To flirt and admire, and perchance

earn a few kind words ! He contrasted her with warm-hearted Audrey, so anxious to give, and Aileen whom he thought could love if she weren't so taken up with high-mindedness. He wanted a girl—he tested the tow-rope with a pull that moved the whole car along—to love and kiss ; some one to belong to him body and soul, whom he could protect, care for, live with till their love enfolded them in a world of their own. Some one who would belong to him as much as his boots did. . . .

" All right, Pete ? "

Gay spoke. " Come along with me and have a drink."

" No, thanks," said Peter. " I'm going home."

Gay raised her eyebrows slightly. " Come along, boys."

Peter made no reply. It was, of course, very rude of him to refuse a girl, but he felt aggressively rude to all women. Between them they had failed him.

It was two o'clock when he said good-night to Tasker and started to return to the mine. Timbury was sleeping as completely as it ever would, and the High Street was deserted, though the lights still blazed. A cool wind had sprung up and scraps of paper and refuse blew forlornly down the street. He looked up at Audrey's window—what he thought must be her window—as he passed. It was dark.

A solitary girl approached, her eyes fixed on him steadily, invitingly.

" Hullo, chérie."

He paused.

But no, it was too horrible, that. Her eyes were black and brilliant, made up for her trade, with blue shadows under them ; her face was blotched with paint ; and underneath—wrinkles. Horrible. She was old. And Avarice, shaking round inside like a tiny pea in a pod, she had for a soul.

" You would like to come home with me ? "

He muttered something inarticulate, thrust some money into her hand, and hurried on with averted head.

Back in the bunkhouse, he lay down fully dressed on the bed and stared into the darkness. A man near was snoring. After a long time he gave a sigh and was quiet. Another muttered and groaned in his sleep. From the far end came a whispering. Peter didn't bother to listen. Once or twice he had noticed things going on which earned his bitter contempt. Whatever his faults might be, he was a proper man. A distorted travesty of sex was an outrage on life. The whispering presently ceased. There was a shuffling, the creak of a bed, then silence.

Peter couldn't sleep. He lay grimly still. In his mind Aileen came back to comfort him, and then arouse again his desires. He wanted her—wanted her. Wasn't he worthy of her now ? In his imagination she seemed so fresh and white and cool, so desirable, lovable, and yet unattainable. In the darkness the frame of his existence crystallized into straight-cut issues. He was sensitive, lusty, imaginative, passionate. They didn't go well together. His

upbringing had made him unfitted for a country like Canada, where one took without thinking. So he thought, and envied. How conventional were the old days ! Rails. An English gentleman. A common little man was happier ; he had formed his life at twenty-one, married to some child. In that moment Peter hated his life. He was striving without getting. Hopelessly. Only his father's guts made him keep on. Monotony was killing the creative spirit in him. Why, it was more exciting to be hungry. One didn't think of other things. His morality, put to the test, was so painfully copybook, puerile, Sunday School. And his body was eager to love.

" I ought to be married," he muttered.

He would see Audrey to-morrow, he decided, and ask her to live with him. Tell her to. He must have peace. He was tired of fighting for the stars. Aileen he must forget. He would never be worthy to marry her. Audrey, he knew, he wouldn't marry if she were free. But she would give him peace. Yes, he would see her to-morrow.

He turned over and buried his face in the pillow. Suddenly he flung back the clothes and jumped out of bed. He walked to the window. The passionless stars looked down, so calm. Beyond them was God—He who had created him, made him what he was, put him into the world to work out his destiny. God.

The silence of the night was absolute. Peter lit a cigarette and puffed slowly.

He wondered, with detachment, what other young men did about the problems of life. Work. Home.

Children. So simple to many. Others, by the look of them, were cold as ice. Happy they !

Peter stared at the distant lights, where Audrey's window must be, stared with all his soul, as if by a tremendous effort of will he could bring her to life before him. . . .

If any one had told him that he was profaning a sacred gift he would have answered them bitterly. Did he want it ? Did he enjoy it ? Did he even want to be young ? The young, except they were rich and had the earth for their toy, suffered bitterly.

His noble gesture lay in the dust. The Face of God hadn't changed. The husband, poor devil, was still lonely on a ship. There would be no warm letter from Aileen to-morrow. And Audrey wanted him.

"I'll see her to-morrow," thought Peter, with set mouth ; "and then, by heaven, I won't *think*. I can think myself out of happiness. Splendid joke. And now have some guts and go to sleep," he counselled himself roughly.

Peter slept at last as dawn was stealing over the sky. He slept uneasily with one hand outstretched to the floor and his body in a heap. And he dreamed of Aileen. It was a vague, beautiful dream, and he woke feeling happier. The vividness of Audrey faded from his mind.

Peter got into a cold shower. He revelled in the cold water, upturning his face, rubbing his hard, muscular body. He shouted and gurgled and sang. A man at the wash-basins, disgruntled, the taste of

booze in his mouth, cursed at him. "Go to hell," said Peter, and gave him "Annie Laurie" full blast.

The man muttered venomously. Love has its cure ; only to booze is there nothing.

CHAPTER XXI

PETER found he was transferred from the comfortable seclusion of the cross-cuts and drifts to a new stope. "Reckon you can climb?" said the straw-boss, his bright blue eyes on him. Peter assented. He had learned enough to say yes to anything.

It was dangerous work in the stopes. As already mentioned, they were tunnels bored up in the form of a Z, connecting one level with another; and nowhere was it safe to step. Even the short horizontal tunnels, like landings, which were interposed between the upward stages, were not safe, for the muck piles—the piles of loose rock from the workings—at each end were drawn periodically; and a man standing on them and not hearing or not heeding quickly enough the warning shout: "Drawing the chutes!—Drawing the chutes!" would be swept downwards in the rumbling pile, like a barrel over Niagara, and crushed to death.

But the samplers had to go everywhere. If a vein of gold were struck in the mouth of Hell, they would have to go down somehow and take a sample.

Laden with his tools, Peter squeezed himself up a

ladder in a narrow shaft, like a well, which rose sheer for some hundred feet, the lamp fastened in his cap bobbing as he clambered up the rungs ; while above and below bobbed the flames belonging to Jock McClure and two other men, for there was supposed to be a rich vein somewhere in the stope and many samples had to be taken.

At the top they came out into a horizontal tunnel, about six feet high and as many broad. Scalers were testing the roof, levering and prodding with their long irons, their lamps weaving and dancing like ghost lights, the shadows playing strange tricks with their peering eyes ; while every now and again there would be a fall of loose rock—a cloud of dust—then again the metallic tapping against the fresh surface.

"Gas bad this morning," said one.

They answered him with grunts. The water gas was bad ; it lay in irregular pockets. Peter could feel a strange weakness of the knees and his heart thudded like a heavy engine. But the feeling disappeared as he neared the end of the tunnel. Now he could see the beginning of the new stope.

Imagine a sixty-foot length of tunnel tilted up at an angle of sixty degrees ; black and shiny and slippery ; lighted only by the acetylene flames of the machinemen who were working on a staging erected at the top, drilling the breast for further explorations. How they managed to pull themselves up there, let alone their heavy tackle, by nothing more solid than steel spikes driven into the rock, was a miracle. Rolling down in great waves, like an avalanche of tin

cans, came the crashing reverberations of the Inger-soll-Rand drill.

Abruptly the din ceased, and there was a silence that could be felt.

" You want to come up here ? " Then a volley of echoes : " Up here—up here—up here ? "

They shouted a reply. A rope was thrown down from the staging, and one by one they hauled themselves up, Peter accomplishing without much difficulty what would have tried his nerves to the utmost a year ago. Then the machinemen left the staging, taking their drill with them by a series of acrobatic feats that would have made their fortune in a circus, and the samplers, two to each side of the breast, marked out their samples and began cutting away.

But soon came an interruption. They were going to blast in the drift below.

" Damn," said Jock McClure. " We shall have to get out."

The others dissented. They were some way up, the rock seemed firm enough, and it was endless trouble climbing up and down the stope. Jock grunted disapprovingly, but made no move.

They waited.

" Fire ! ". A thin cry came from below, swelling rapidly to a shout of warning : " Fire ! —FIRE ! —FIRE ! —" Then diminishing in the distance : " FIRE ! —FIRE ! —Fire ! " . . .

A moment's wait, then : " BOOM ! " . . . A heavy current of air surged up the tunnel and blew out their lamps. The darkness thrummed and sang

like a taut banjo string. The man next to Peter shifted nervously.

"They've got a heavy charge in."

"BOOM!—BOOM!" The tunnel shook with the concussion. Several pieces of rock were dislodged and clattered down below.

"Here, I'm going down. . . . There'll be a cave-in."

"No, you fool! Stop where—" The sentence was never finished. There was a terrific explosion, treble the charge of the others, and the whole breast bulged downwards. The staging gave as if it were matchwood, and the four men were flung to the bottom of the chute. Instinctively Peter tried to shield his head with his arms. Something hit him a violent blow in the back. He felt the speed of descent lessen, then there was another thunderous crash and renewed rumbling. The whole mine seemed to be caving in. The last thing he knew before final blackness came was the feel of hair in his mouth.

A bulk of timber in the roof of the south end of the drift smouldered slowly. Hanging below it were two electric wires, the ends sputtering and sparking viciously when they touched together. A man lay on his back beneath them, his eyes wide open and staring. But he never saw. Where his head touched the ground was stained a dark red.

A light air came down the tunnel and suddenly the timber burst into flames. Rapidly the fire spread along the drift and out into the cross-cut beyond.

Two muckers, Polaks, were slowly pushing a car loaded with ore along the track, their half-naked bodies bent against the weight. Monotonously, without looking up, they cried : "Hi !—Hey !" as a warning of their approach. The wheels of the car rumbled faintly.

Suddenly the fire caught them, with the curving speed of a whip-lash it caught them, roaring and crackling with fury it caught them ; two long tongues of flame darting and drawing back, darting and drawing back, like the tongue of a snake ; yet always advancing. Their terror was ludicrous. They turned and stared, both bullet-like heads together, eyes dilated, jaws dropping. Then they screamed. They tried to push the heavy car faster, beat at the iron with their fists. One man darted to the side and tried to squeeze himself through the narrow gap between the car and the wall. The other shrieked at him, pummelled him madly. . . .

The fire passed on.

Two machinemen came out of the cross-cut, dragging the post of their drill with them. They had heard the crackle of flames from afar. They ran into the level station and pressed the bell of the cage. It rang, but there was no answering swish as the cage came down. Half a dozen others joined them, and they rang the bell again and again. But nothing happened. One man shouted up the shaft, as if his voice would carry three-quarters of a mile !

Smoke began to fill the station, then suddenly the

lights went out. Thereafter panic reigned. Men poured in from all sides, from the cross-cuts, drifts, and stopes on the west side ; and in the darkness they fought to get up the ladder of the emergency shaft. Three thousand feet they had to climb up rungs dripping with water, and if one stopped to rest for a moment he would be knocked aside by the pressure from below. Before the first man had reached the surface four lay motionless at the bottom of the shaft ; and as he clambered, exhausted, out into the sunlight the cage began to work.

Peter recovered consciousness and opened his eyes, staring for some time into the darkness. His mouth was dry and had an unpleasant taste in it. He licked his lips. He had been falling. . . . But it was no dream he had awakened from. The explosion—the cave-in—his fall down the stope—all were dreadful realities. And the darkness about him was absolute. It pressed down with the finality of a coffin-lid.

He had the horrible fear that he was buried alive.

He sat up suddenly, and the movement caused him intense pain in his right leg. He thought he heard the bones grind together and turned sick and faint. He must have lost consciousness for a time after that, for when he opened his eyes again he saw a flickering glow, as if some one were holding a lighted match.

“ Hallo,” he said faintly.

“ That you, Cochrane ? ” It was Jock McClure’s voice. “ Are you hurt ? ”

"I think I've broken my leg." Peter tried to sit up, but a gentle hand pressed him back. "All right, son, stay where you are."

Jock struck another match and lighted the stump of candle that he always carried for emergencies, placing it carefully on a flat rock beside him. The flame, burning small and still, showed dimly a section of tunnel some six feet by-twenty, with a pile of jagged rock at the end.

"I mustn't burn that long, for I don't know how much air we have."

Peter's heart sank. He had thought he was rescued.

"You mean—we're buried here?"

"Aye, I'm afraid so. I've looked round and I canna see any way out. I think we're at the north end of the drift, and the middle has come down and blocked us in."

"What about the stope? Couldn't we get out there?"

"There'll be a hundred ton of rock where the stope was."

"Oh." Peter was silent. Sometimes, when he had been day-dreaming, he had wondered what it would feel like to be face to face with some real danger. Now he knew.

"But don't worry," said Jock cheerily, "we'll get out all right—I'm just sounding the possibilities. You had better let me look at that leg of yours."

He felt it over with fingers sure and practised as a surgeon's—there were few things, apparently, that Jock could not do—but even so, Peter had to clench

his teeth to bear the pain. The thought of hearing the bones grind again sickened him.

Jock looked at his white face. "Hurt a bit?"

"Just a trifle."

"That's the spirit." Jock wrenched at a board sticking from the roof and cut it into splints with his jack-knife. "That'll hold it till we get out," he said, as he bound the leg up.

Peter forced his mind away from the pain.

"You think we will, then?"

"Sure to." Jock took out his handkerchief and slipped it round the splints below the knee. "The boys'll be along to us soon."

Peter cast his eyes round their prison, pressing in the closer by shadows cast by the dim light of the candle. There was something over in the far corner by the rock pile.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing.

"Tom Chadwick," said Jock, without looking round. "He's dead."

"Oh." Peter lay back. He longed for a cigarette.

Jock finished the bandage and took up the precious candle.

"We've got the air-line that they use to supply the drills running through down at the side there. I'm going to tap it at three-minute intervals to let the boys know where we are. Now I had better blow the candle out."

Darkness again, thick, penetrating—a blackness that reached to a man's very soul. Peter broke out

in a cold sweat. He had to clench his fists to prevent himself screaming out."

" You miserable coward," he adjured himself. He must have spoken aloud, for Jock answered :

" That's all right, son—I feel that way myself. You don't want to think about it. Now don't jump, I'm going to tap the pipe."

" Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . ." Peter had nerved himself for a ringing crash, but the sound was dull and woolly.

Jock's heart sank, though he said nothing to Peter. If the pipe had been free along its length it would have reverberated clearly ; the woolly sound indicated the weight of rock pressing on it.

They strained their ears for an answer ; but none came. Jock was puzzled, for a rescue party should have been there long ago. Evidently something more serious than a mere local fall of rock had occurred—perhaps the cross-cut had caved in too. If so, it might be days before they were found.

Peter dozed off, but his subconscious mind still worked feverishly in a hazy, blood-coloured background. He was lying in a coffin, his arms bound and helpless, and at three-minute intervals nails were driven in the lid. " Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . ."

It was getting warmer. It was getting unbearable.

He awoke with a jerk.

" I'm dying," he thought, and sat up, panting for breath.

"Jock!"

"Yes?"

"It's hot in here."

"Aye, I know. Sit up as high as you can to get out of the carbon dioxide."

"I wish those chaps would come."

"They'll be here soon."

"I wonder if they will," thought Peter. Aloud he said: "What do you make the time?"

"One o'clock when I last looked."

"In the morning?"

"Aye."

"Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . ." The dull woolly sound came from the air-line suddenly as Jock rapped it with his knife—duller and woollier than ever, it seemed now. There was no answering tremor.

Peter lay back with a feeling of defeat. They would never come. Perhaps they had not even started. He had to hold on to himself against a sudden surge of panic: the darkness was pressing in his brain—he was going blind!

"Jock."

"Aye?"

"Have you—a match?"

Jock scraped one against the rock, and it burst into flame with a reddish tinge, showing how foul the air was. Peter gave a little sob of relief, and looked about him, savouring to the utmost every second of the flame, the blessed reality it restored, even though it were only the walls of their prison.

The flame flickered and died. Even the faint glow from the tip died. Darkness again.

He turned over on his side and put his forehead against the rock. It was cooler that way. . . .

How he longed for a cigarette !

It was about a year since he had come to Canada. It seemed a lifetime. More had happened to him in that time than the rest of his years put together ; and yet he had only just begun to live. . . . He remembered a landlady and her daughters with whom he had once lodged when in London—"depressed gentlewomen," they were supposed to be. "We haven't got much money but we do see life." They were always saying that ; but even then the utter foolishness of the remark had struck him. Poor people never do see life : they merely see one side of it, completely or not, even as a rich man does. And he had seen mostly only one side of Canada.

Something in the name "Canada" appealed strongly to his imagination. It was extraordinary how he thought of Canada, in the large sense, as a definite personality, like a young and beautiful girl waiting to be wooed. There was a poem, "The Immigrant," he had read in some Canadian magazine. The last lines had stayed in his memory :

"And if, O Lord, I prove a failure,
Hide-bound in my old desire,
Let on me descend the judgment,
Feel the vengeance of the fire.

"Canada, O Lord, is sacred,
Bound by ties of ancient fame ;
Grant me that in my dishonour
I alone may bear the blame."

A drunkard, he supposed, it referred to ; yet he could feel the same way. Well, he had kept on fighting. A man can't do more than that. He had had "guts." He would have guts to the end, though he wouldn't die peacefully ; he would be fighting, struggling, to the last agonized breath. . . . Fighting, struggling. . . . Would Aileen wonder what had become of him ? . . .

Then, curiously, he thought of his father's gold watch ticking away by itself in the bunkhouse. How near he had been to selling it !

"Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . ."

He stirred uneasily and an agonizing pain shot through his injured leg. He was jerked back to full consciousness. It was so hot. He found it hard to breathe. Soon they would be struggling for breath —fighting for breath . . .

"Jock!"

"What is it, son?"

Peter calmed himself by a tremendous effort. He was shaking all over, and drenched with sweat.

"Just—my leg. Momentary twinge. All right now."

"Aye. . . . Don't think about your breathing."

Peter clenched his fists and exerted all his will

power. When he spoke again his voice was quite normal.

"Tell me, Jock—we *are* done for, aren't we?"

There was a pause before Jock replied :

"I think they'll get to us in time. There must be a little air leaking in somewhere or we shouldn't have lasted till now." He began suddenly to cough and choke. Peter reached out in the darkness, forgetting about his leg, and tried to hold him upright.

"Ah. . . . Thanks. . . . This blasted silicosis. Rock dust gets everywhere."

There was silence again. Peter was slipping back into unconsciousness when Jock spoke :

"Would you wish to offer up a prayer?"

Peter shook his head. It seemed dishonest to begin praying now by asking God for something.

"No, I don't think so," he said. "But don't let me stop you."

"Oh aye—but I ken we feel the same about it."

"If any one has the right to ask, you have," said Peter warmly.

Jock was a married man, and was liked and respected throughout the whole township.

"Aye, but ye canna tell." Jock's voice hardened and his accent became more apparent. "Have I ever spoken to ye o' my daughter, Mr. Cochrane?"

"I never knew you had one."

"Aye, I ha' one—poor lass. . . . I turned her oot when she was in trouble. . . . Maybe I should ha' forgiven her. . . . I canna go to God. . . ."

A long silence. Then Jock spoke again :

"I was talking of praying : it's strange how men occupy themselves when they're shut in. I mind the fall of rock at the Kendal, five year ago. They told dirty stories."

Peter laughed. "I don't remember any."

"Nor I, except the one about the young lady from Peebles, and I could never see the joke in that. But when they got out and the newspaper boys asked them how they passed the time, they said in prayer ! Dirty stories would shock the public so. Entombed men are always supposed to pray. But I canna bear a hypocrite. I am reelegious, ye understand, but it's better to face His displeasure asking nothing, I'm thinking."

Peter made no reply. It was getting terribly hard to breathe. He could hear his lungs labouring—or was it Jock's ? In and out—in and out . . .

"Mr. Cochrane ?" (The effect on Jock seemed to make him very solemn and formal.)

"Yes ?"

"You would understand the Differential Calculus, no doubt ?"

"I should do."

The Differential Calculus and all mathematics, like other and more human factors, seemed very far away just now.

"Well, I'm a Scotsman, as ye know, and Scotsmen dinna like wasting time. I've got pretty high with ma mathematics, but the Calculus has always stumped me. Do you think you could explain the first principles ? It would pass the time till they get to us."

Peter's head was throbbing, and that horrible red haze was again swirling and eddying, at once clouding and disintegrating his brain. But he could not help but grin. To spend their last hours with mathematics ! And Scotsmen were supposed to have no sense of humour !

He stretched out his hand in the darkness and found Jock's.

" You're a good sort, Jock."

" I'm liking ye."

" As you say, it may be useful in—it'll pass the time."

" And you'll excuse me if I tap at intervals ? "

Jock's voice seemed to come from a great distance. The red haze had nearly triumphed. It was pulling him—pulling him . . .

" . . . tap at intervals ? "

He forced his mind back. Jock was talking about the Calculus and tapping at intervals.

" Oh, sure . . . of course. . . . The idea of the Calculus is this . . ."

" 'Tis a peety we canna use pencil and paper."

" It is." This time Peter roared with laughter till the red haze gyrated madly round his brain. Canna use pencil and paper ! Oh, Jock was a humorist ! He was the funniest chap ever !

" Excuse me."

Tap-tap-tap. . . . Tap-tap-tap. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

"THE wheels!"

A murmur like the thin note of the wind ran round the huge crowd, most of the town, waiting on the open ground before the mine, their upturned faces white in the moonlight, their eyes fixed on the great wheels on the top of the Central shafthouse.

They had begun to move. After two hours patient waiting they were moving again at last. The cage was coming up. The crowd strained forward. Who would be in it?

There was absolute silence. The mills had stopped working. The earth was still. And as though in sympathy, Nature was silent too. Not a breath of air stirred. From machinery, inhuman, came the brief popping roar of escaping steam. Then it ceased, and there was silence again.

The wheels were flickering rapidly now. The cage was coming up—up. . . . Suddenly a woman cried out : "O God—O God. . . ." It was not a supplication, but a dull reiteration—hopeless, passionless, monotonous : "O God—O God. . . ." A little crowd formed round her ; obscured her all but two white stockings and a pair of wrinkled red shoes. They were lifted up and travelled slowly

through the crowd. "Now then, make way there —make way." There was a hitch. The stockings rose abruptly and a pair of coarse pink knickers showed, dragged down by an unconscious hand. "Make way there!" The stockings moved on again slowly, and with them that dull, senseless reiteration : "O God—O God. . . ."

The wheels slowed and stopped. There was a clang as the cage door opened, and a stretcher, covered by a blanket, was borne round to the front of the shafthouse. A strained silence, then the word was passed down from mouth to mouth : "No. 876 —Joe Balanger . . . 26 Ninth Avenue." An old woman on the outskirts of the crowd cried shrilly : "What? I can't hear." The word came. A man shouted at her. Her face changed as if she had been struck. She slipped quietly to the ground.

The crowd resumed their watch on the wheels.

Since noon the fire had been raging, and it still burnt as fiercely as ever. When it was almost under control, a case of dynamite exploded, killing two men, and the flames burst out afresh, travelling with terrible swiftness through section after section, gaining impetus from combustible waste material left in the cross-cuts and drifts. Every able-bodied man in the town had volunteered for rescue work ; some were down the shafts, protecting the timbering from the flames ; others had donned gas masks and formed search-parties to bring up those entombed by falling rock ; others still had enrolled

as special constables under Tasker, and were engaged in patrolling the town against sabotage. A dressing-station, manned by volunteer help, had been established in one of the bunkhouses ; and in the church hall lay fifteen silent forms covered with sheets, some with little numbered brass discs on their breasts, some still waiting identification, some impossible to identify.

Midnight came and went. A shiver like the swift passing of shadows as the sun goes in ran through the crowd at the note of doom in the slow strokes.

The wheels began to revolve again.

Presently they stopped, and the cage door clanged. The crowd strained forward as usual, prepared to add another to the roll of death ; but it was one of the mine captains who stepped out. He was still wearing his respirator, and the hideous pointed front gave him the appearance of something inhuman. With the slow, deliberate movements of an old man he sat down to unfasten it.

"Are they all out, master ?" called a voice.

"Have they found my Tom yet ?" shrilled a woman.

"Have you got into Drift 10 ?"

He shook his head wearily, and opening his mouth to speak, started to cough and retch. Presently he staggered away on the arms of two specials. Another man took his place.

Audrey Thomas stood on the outskirts of the crowd, drawn thither by an impulse stronger than

the mere fascination of horror, yet not daring to put the question she craved. Once as a child in a village in South Wales she had waited all night outside the colliery for them to bring up the victims of a gas explosion ; but then she had a right to be there : every woman knew her father and brother and sympathized. Now she could tell no one. The wedding ring on her finger burned. In fear and trembling she had been to the mortuary, but the sight of the rows of white-sheeted forms and the smell of charred flesh had overcome her, and she had hurried out again, shuddering.

She had a queer feeling now that she was being watched, and turning, encountered the staring gaze of Black Jack. Often she had seen him in the scrub round Timbury, striding about at terrific speed, yet aimlessly, and muttering to himself.

He came up and stood beside her. She was conscious of his towering bulk and flowing black beard, of his eyes staring intently at her.

"Who is the trollop ?" he said in a deep voice. She flushed and turned away without answering.

"Who is the trollop ?"

"I—please go away. I don't know what you mean."

"Ye do. For every loose woman that goes down the mine two miner lads must die. Ye're a Jezebel !" His voice rose to a ringing bellow that caused all heads to turn. "A painted Jezebel !" He loomed over her, his huge knotted hands outstretched as if he would strangle her.

"Take him away!" screamed Audrey. "Oh, God, take——" She fell to the ground.

"For shame on you, Jack," cried a woman, "to frighten the lass so, and her in sore distress!"

Black Jack struggled furiously in the hands that held him, his immense strength flinging the men this way and that. He groaned and panted and muttered, saliva running down his beard.

"Dick! Have they brought Dick out yet?"

"No—nor likely to these ten years back."

"Poor devil," said a man. "They were taking a girl down to see the mine when the rope of the cage broke. They say she was the cause of it."

"Superstition."

"Aye, but they've never let a girl down since."

All at once Black Jack became quiet, and with tears rolling down his cheeks suffered himself to be led away. He never looked at Audrey, lying on the ground with her head pillowed on a woman's lap.

"There, dearie, he's gone now. Drink this, and you'll feel better." The woman held out a glass of brandy that some one had fetched. Presently Audrey opened her eyes.

"Has he gone?" she whispered. "I have never—I didn't——"

"Sure he has. Don't you worry about what he said. He's mad."

Audrey shuddered and got up. She felt she could not endure the woman's kindly gaze.

"Thank you for helping me," she said. "I had better go home now."

As she reached the boundary of the mine property the wheels began to revolve again. She could hear a murmur run through the crowd. But she never looked back. She left for Quebec next morning.

Slowly a search-party proceeded along Cross-cut 14, their lamps dipping, peering, moving on again, the light reflected eerily from the oily water that sloshed about between the tracks. Like ghouls they seemed in their hideous pointed masks, and on the foremost man was pinned a white card printed with large letters : "RESCUE," lest some poor soul, with nerves broken by the horror of darkness, should scream out at the sight.

Now and then there would be a sudden shower of loose rock, and they would pause, tense, their eyes peering obliquely through the transparent front of their masks at the roof. They would tap it here and there, dislodging more loose rock. Then they would go on.

They were beginning to despair of finding any one else alive. The fire had passed like a scourge, leaving a trail of blackened timbers and twisted rails, while a charred, unrecognizable heap would speak of a man caught and overcome in his frantic flight to the level station.

But the search-party were thorough. Not a foot was to go unexplored. The fact that most of them had been thirty hours without sleep made no difference. While there was a chance they would take it.

They entered Drift 10, and almost at once came up

against a pile of rock that reached to the roof. The captain of transportation who was leading the party nudged the next man and shook his head. The other nodded, but lifted his hammer and tapped the air-line running down at the side, then put his hand on it and waited. To his surprise he felt a faint answering tremor. He took off his mask, braving the choking atmosphere, and tapped again. This time there was no mistake. "Tap-tap-tap—Tap-tap-tap . . ." the answer came.

There were men alive in the drift.

The mine captain knelt down by the pipe and tapped out a message in the Morse Code : "How many ?"

Back came the reply, muffled, slow : "Two—Hurry."

After that it was a matter of time and labour and perfect organization. A man was sent back to the level station to telephone to the shafthead to make preparations on the surface ; then two at a time hewed at the rock pile, working with sure, accustomed movements that wasted no effort. As they tired, other men took their place ; and so it went on in an endless chain, with every square foot of rock being cut out by hand and transported to the mouth of the cross-cut. Periodically they tapped on the air-line reassuring messages ; and always the reply was the same, brief, hesitant : "Hurry."

At length they came to the last few feet. Every movement was dangerous now, for it brought down showers of loose rock from the increasingly weaken-

ing structure above. They paused to prop and timber. The mine captain consulted the plan. They should be almost through. . . . Then the next blow brought forth a sudden rumble, and they had to retreat hurriedly before the cascade of rock, breaking the timbers like matchwood.

It was heartbreaking.

Again they prepared to advance. The captain rapped on the pipe. There was no answer. He tightened his lips. "Hurry," he said to his men.

Once again they were almost through. A gap was made under a huge boulder which had saved the lives of the men behind by spanning the drift like a roof beam. But the slightest vibration now and it would crash down.

The captain shouted : "Hallo, there !"

There was no reply. He rapped on the air-line, but still nothing came.

"Get out a bit more," he said to the man at the face. "But be careful."

With infinite care the man raised his pick. The steel point went right through and a puff of foul air came out and a thin, weak voice, rambling in high delirium.

" . . . Let x be a function of y . . . then dy/dx
. . . no, dx/dy "

"Hallo," shouted the captain again.

" . . . Let x be a function of y . . . then dy/dx
. . . "

A small wiry man stepped forward. "I can crawl through and bring them out, sir," he volunteered.

The mine captain nodded reluctantly. It would take them hours to get that boulder down.

"Be careful," he cautioned.

The man's face twisted up in a one-sided grin. He took a pick and enlarged the hole. Twice the others thought they saw the boulder quiver and shouted to him. Each time he turned with his one-sided grin.

"Hold your bleedin' breaths."

The opening was large enough now. He turned over on his back, facing the boulder, and began to wriggle through. The others watched in strained silence. They saw first his head disappear, then his body, then his legs. He was through.

A gleam of light came out as he flashed his torch round.

"One's a deader," he called, "and the others aren't far off. Now out we come, one at a time."

He seized hold of the unconscious form of Jock McClure and dragged him to the opening. The others took him by the shoulders and pulled him through, and he was hurried back to the level station and up to the dressing-station on the surface. It was Peter's turn next, then the man caught hold of the dead man.

"Leave him be," cried the captain. "We can't do anything for him. We'll get him later."

The man muttered something about "bleedin' breaths" and pushed the dead man through feet foremost. His shoulders jammed in the opening. They pulled hard, and he came with a jerk.

"Look out!" cried the captain.

He was too late. The boulder gave way suddenly and crashed on the head of the rescuer ; and with it came rumbling down the whole of Peter's late prison.

Dawn was breaking as the last man came up the shaft. The ground in front of the mine was deserted. A chill wind had sprung up and driven the crowd, glum and silent, to their homes.

The roll of death was complete.

The cold grey light coming through the open door of the shafthouse seemed to establish some unnatural communication with the mystery of ropes and wheels arching up to meet the blackness above, as if revealing for the first time what they really were.

Against the eastern horizon showed the black pyramid of No. 3 shaft, where the fire still smouldered. A thin spiral of smoke rose slowly, ascended to a height of several hundred feet, then bent over and hung like an evil spell.

CHAPTER XXIII

IT was two months before Peter's leg was mended, and more than twice that time before he recovered fully from shock. Even then he still dreamed at nights that he was being buried alive, and woke in a cold sweat of fear. The time in the hospital passed slowly, particularly when he was convalescent. The nuns who managed it were as kind as it was possible to be, and he received every attention, but the days moved on the rails of rules and regulations, and smoking was regarded with horror. Several people came to see him : Tasker and Mrs. Tasker, Baldock, and, like a breath of fresh air, a young brother of the Walters he had met coming out to Canada.

"Bob asked me to look you up," he said, as he showered gifts, cigarettes, and candies on the bed, and shook hands. "He's never forgotten you. He calls you the Perfect English Gentleman."

"Gosh," said Peter, unconsciously Canadian, "leave that alone, will you?"

"But he means it. He thinks you're an asset to the country. He's taken up politics and wants to drive out graft and twisters. He wants to know what you're doing."

"In bed," said Peter, with a touch of his old humour.

Walters chatted for some time and cheered Peter up considerably. He was a bright youngster, at once ingenuous and amazingly sophisticated, with his eye on the highest office his country could give. "Remember me to your brother, won't you?" said Peter, when he got up to go. "Sure I will. I'll tell him you're doing fine. He's crazy on Englishmen."

"Thanks," said Peter laconically. It was impossible to be offended, but a little funny when he had been accustomed as a matter of course to regard England, the mother of nations, as the greatest country the world had ever seen. A bohunk would tell him he liked Englishmen next.

Tasker brought him local news. There had been many changes in Timbury. The fire had purged the town even as it had swept through the mine, and the mayor and his satellites were toppled from their pedestals and new men outside the old ring of politics installed in their place. Tasker, of course, had fallen, too, but he had applied for and obtained the office of Chief of Police at a small township in Manitoba.

"I've had my lesson," he told Peter. "I'm off the booze now for life."

"I was afraid the *Eagle* would do you down."

Tasker grinned. "Little Billiter is prowling round like a bear with a sore head these days—no news. Their last edition read like a Sunday School sheet."

Baldock brought him news of a different import. He was a strange man. He lived alone in a little

bungalow on the fringe of the mine. No one seemed really to know him—he had no friends—yet all were conscious of his personality, like some mountain top looming indistinctly through the mist. Silent, watchful, saying little, and that in the briefest possible way, he moved behind the scenes.

He nodded to Peter as if he had seen him only yesterday and sat down, the chair creaking beneath his weight, and fixed his colourless eyes out of the window.

There was a silence, then, reversing the usual rôles of invalid and visitor, Peter inquired after the other injured.

"They're doing all right," said Baldock abruptly. Then : "You know you get compensation through the Workmen's Compensation Act ?—Sixty per cent. of your pay ?"

"Yes—it seems very generous."

"Not all will own it. However. When you're well again I've a staff job for you on the surface. Analyst. The pay is two hundred a month to start. After that it depends on yourself."

Peter's eyes glowed. "That's awfully decent of you. I'll try not to let you down."

Baldock got up to go and offered his hand. "You'll be all right. I like to see an Old Countryman get on. I was overseas myself during the War." He moved heavily to the door, nodding distantly to the sister as he went out.

Peter lay back and gazed up at the ceiling. His heart was singing. He had a real job at last.

"He's a jolly square chap," he thought of Baldock ; "they've got some in this country."

He picked up a paper Tasker had left. On the front page, with that of other entombed men, was his photo specially taken by little Billiter, on the plea that it would do him a good turn ; and underneath was the caption : "Heroic Englishman."

"Well, well," thought Peter, "I am getting on," though without any modesty at all it was difficult to see just what he had done that was heroic. But soon he put the paper aside and just thought. Two hundred dollars a month. Analyst. After all his agonies it was very sweet.

"A lady to see you, m'sieu."

The ward sister glided up to him the following afternoon, her hands folded meekly together in front as they always were when not occupied. She would have announced the presence of a ghost just as impersonally.

Peter started up in bed. Surely it could not be Audrey. . . .

It was Aileen.

She was standing at the door, a huge bunch of pink flowers in her hands. Then she followed the sister down the ward, her heels tapping lightly on the hard-wood floor—he noticed every detail. She was wearing a light tailor-made costume which suited her slim figure to perfection, and a hat with a wide brim. Her features were grave and serious. Then a shaft of sunlight lighted on her brown eyes and warm colouring

. . . in such contrast to the atmosphere of the hospital."

"Oh, hallo," he said, then, as the sister withdrew: "Take that chair. It's a bit rickety, but it bore Baldock all right, and he's fifteen stone. . . ." He hardly knew what he was saying.

"Oh, Peter—I'm so sorry." She sat down and drew off her gloves, smoothing them out carefully side by side on the counterpane. Yet she did not look at him, and he felt that in some way they were strangers.

"How did you know?" he asked.

"The papers were full of it. And they gave—all the names. I'm on my holiday, on the way to Toronto, so I broke the journey."

"Oh." It was some time before the significance of this dawned on him, then when it did he flushed slightly.

"It was awfully decent of you. I'm very glad to see you—you must know that."

"Do you mind if I take my hat off a minute? It's rather tight."

"Yes—of course."

She shook out her hair, the thick coppery hair that he loved. "I've asked the sister: she says your leg will soon be well."

"Oh yes—and that reminds me—" He told her about the new job.

"I'm so glad."

"It is rather good. . . . Thanks for your letter."

"Thanks for yours."

There was a silence. Aileen started to play with the tassels of the counterpane.

"Is there anything wrong?" he blurted out.

"What should there be?"

"Nothing—only I thought we were friends."

"So we are."

"But your letter—I had hoped—" Peter stopped. Things were impossible. He and Aileen were going round and round in the dark.

She bent very low.

"You never—said anything."

"I had a rotten sort of job then. . . . Tell me, are you tied to Mr. Cantrell?"

"No, of course not. But he's been very good to me."

"But you'll leave him when—?"

"Yes."

Peter touched her hand. His heart was beating fast, and he felt sick and faint.

"Aileen . . . what I mean is . . . will you marry me?"

"Of course I will."

He clutched her hand then and held it tight. The room had grown suddenly dark. He was falling . . . falling. . . . He closed his eyes. Aileen's cheek was against his, and she was murmuring something inarticulate. . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

THE overhead carrier that ran the entire length of the mine property rumbled continuously, swelling the grey heaps of tailings which were gradually filling in what had once been a fair-sized lake. Peter, smoking a pipe before dinner, watched the grabs idly, marking with approval the exactness with which the motorman deposited his loads. He was attired in the accepted dress of the mine staff—brown khaki shirt and knotted tie, breeches, and imposing high laced boots which would give way presently to the anti-climax of carpet slippers when Aileen complained about the scratches on her polished floors. From the bungalow behind came intermittent splashings as Peter the Second had his bath, and Aileen's voice, fresh and clear :

“ Five men and a dog went to mow a meadow.
 . . . Six men and a dog went to mow a meadow.
. . . ” Then a quickening gabble, “ Ten men, nine
men, eight men, seven men . . . ” which was the
signal for Peter the Second to be lifted out and
swathed in mighty towels.

Peter smiled slightly, contentedly—the smile of a man who sees the earth turning about him and his family.

Peter had been married eighteen months now, and he had still to get used to the fact that Aileen was his to love and cherish all his life ; that he, a lonely roamer, had a home of his own ; and that, most tremendous of all, he was a father.

There was no doubt that marriage suited him. He was still apt to take life as seriously or dream the most romantic dreams, but he was getting the married man's indifference to petty trifles and ability to hold on to the root principles of life ; and whenever, imagining himself a very chemist among chemists, he strode about looking too important, or rock structures and similar mysteries threatened to assume too great proportions, Aileen would laugh at him and call him Panhandle Pete, or something equally disrespectful ; and suddenly the percentage of gold in a sample would seem of very small importance compared to the happiness in her eyes. Which, of course, it was. And with the dreams she would steer "I" into "We" so unconsciously that he thought they were his.

Of his memories with Aileen some events stood out.

Their marriage. The registrar (neither of them had any relatives in Canada : Ruth and her husband were in New York) mumbling out the marriage service in what Peter felt to be a totally inadequate way for so great an occasion, then pushing his glasses back on his forehead and becoming for the first time human.

"Be good to her," he said.

And Peter felt a choking sensation in his throat and could not speak.

Then Baldock, who had offered abruptly to be his best man, silent and inscrutable as ever, shaking hands with him and bowing awkwardly to Aileen, who impulsively kissed him ; and other people shaking hands, and some one saying "Mrs. Cochrane" ; and Aileen looking up at him with shining eyes, as if—funny thought—she were so *proud*. That he could never forget. Surely every man has in his life one perfect day. That, Peter felt, was his.

Their honeymoon. —With Aileen in Nova Scotia : impetuous excursions on a small yacht which neither of them knew how to handle properly. . . . Aileen in a white sweater, her cheeks glowing with health, steering, while he performed dubious experiments with various ropes. Then back to the hotel at night, and Aileen in his arms. . . .

Furnishing the bungalow which he leased at a nominal rent from the mine. Aileen and he standing side by side, like two children, while an enthusiastic salesman tried to sell them the entire store, including fixtures. "A walnut bedroom suite in the very best modern style—twin beds. . . ." He bounced on them vigorously to show the superlative quality of the mattresses. Peter and Aileen nodded politely and avoided each other's eyes.

"Or perhaps you prefer a double bed?"

Peter nodded shortly and cursed the salesman under

his breath. Who wanted to be ultra-modern, or whatever the reason was, with Aileen ?

The salesman smiled indulgently. "Now here we have something really smart. . . ."

Then, one night, the quarrel. The exact beginnings were too vague to be defined ; but they went to bed without a word to each other. He could feel her lying beside him in the darkness, still and rigid. And he lay on his back, a careful distance apart, sleepless and miserable, yet unable to make the gesture necessary. It seemed they would never speak again. Then suddenly the form beside him crumpled and he heard a little cry, hastily stifled, like that of an animal in pain. He reached out blindly, and they were in each other's arms, savouring to the full the delicious fruits of reconciliation. "Peter . . . I was such a beast." "Darling, I was a brute. . . ."

Aileen as a hostess. They settled down easily into the social life of the mine, entertaining and being entertained, though never on the wild scale of the Tasker days. The great fire seemed to have sobered every one. Like many other girls who have had to work hard for a living, Aileen gloried in a home of her own, and was proud of the excellence of her dinners. Peter would come back to tremendous bustlings and the continual weary drawl of the hired woman, whom they agreed to look on as a kind of joke. "What about those capons, Mis' Cochrane ? . . . Two more spoons ?" And Aileen would

come in to be pinned up, and Peter would grunt over his dress tie, which state of magnificence once seemed gone for ever, left behind in England, but which he now took again as a matter of course. Aileen looked lovely, she so obviously enjoyed it all. Peter was happy.

For a long time he lived in the make-believe of marriage. People regarded them as an ideal couple. Just as on occasion his imagination had showed him, the perfect salesman, the perfect engineer, the perfect chemist, so now it showed him the perfect lover ; and he tried to act up to it. But because he was easy to live with, when once the sordid discomforts of a struggle for existence had been removed, and Aileen was an even-tempered girl, he discovered that reality was even more beautiful than the dream. Marriage was a happy state. He burst into song sometimes when the wonder of his wife and his home struck him. Perhaps Aileen understood, for she smiled quietly.

Baldock often came to see them. He was a brilliant bridge player when he chose to take an interest in the game ; and bridge was much played in mine society. But he came more often by himself. Who he had been or what he had been they never knew, except that he was a Canadian born—he was born in Prince Edward Island. He never spoke of his past ; in fact, rarely talked at all. He liked to play chess with Peter ; and later Aileen would bring them coffee. Then when he left he would bow with studious politeness. “ Thank you, Mrs. Cochrane,

for a very pleasant evening." And he strode back to his lonely bungalow, a great mountain of a man, as impenetrable as the stars.

But evidently he gained something from Peter's society. And Peter gained from his. With his healthy body and still receptive mind, he came into the presence of a first-class intellectual force. Almost without a word from Baldock he began to see life squarely, and see it whole. He turned out the attic of his mind and began to store it with worth-while knowledge. Baldock indicated here and there a book he thought worth reading. Peter began to read voraciously. He discovered how a man can go to a good school and yet learn nothing. In short, he began to live.

Then the greatest day of all, when he tiptoed into the bedroom full of the direst forebodings and saw Aileen lying in bed very white and still, her forehead dewed with perspiration as if she had accomplished some tremendous exertion. Her eyes smiled at him reassuringly, then fell to a lump in the bedclothes by her side. He went down on his knees beside the bed and bowed his head in speechless adoration. Aileen put out her hand and slowly stroked his head. "He's just like you, Peter, as I wanted him to be. . . ."

His work progressed steadily. None of his bad points and most of his good came into fruition in the mine. There was no doubt that the authorities

regarded him as a man rigidly honest and trustworthy. He was curiously suited to the Vandervell. There was nothing speculative about it. So many tons of ore passed daily through the mill ; so many bars of gold were exported. And though, of course, no gold mine is a permanent proposition—the day must come when it is worked out—yet it would more than last his lifetime. A few months after his marriage an offer had come through Walters, with whom he had started a correspondence, to go out on the construction of a new power and pulp mill ; but he had refused. It might mean increased opportunities, and would pay more than his present position, yet, on the other hand, it might fade away with the suddenness that jobs can do in Canada and leave him stranded till some other plant was started—which might be a long time. Being the wife of a construction engineer, waiting at home while he moved from camp to camp, seeing him but seldom, was not the life for Aileen, who made no secret of the fact that she loved him passionately and could hardly be separated from him even for a day. And he was making ample for their needs. Perhaps, too, when it came to the point, he had lost the taste for further adventure.

Some old associations had been reformed. After he had been well enough to leave the hospital Aileen's holiday was over, and as she thought it only fair to give Mr. Cantrell two months' notice—there was nothing to prevent them being married as soon as possible—he had spent the leave

the mine allowed him before taking up his new job in Winnipeg, travelling there by easy stages.

At Hearst he called to see White. The railway policeman looked more ill and thin than ever, and his eyes seemed to have receded into his head. He stared at Peter as if he hardly recognized him. "You—you want to see me?" "Just to find out where MacTaggert is." "He's at Ogahalla now—on the B. and B. gang." Peter thanked him and held out his hand. White took it uncertainly, and closed the door. Peter was glad to get away from Hearst.

As the train went through Wapiti he looked for Falardeau's hat, and, sure enough, there it was—with the bootlace still round it—at the foot of the embankment. He shouted and waved his hand, and the foreman looked up. Peter could see his jaw drop—he must be saying, "Co-crane!" The two men with him stared stolidly. Peter wondered if this brief rest was as welcome to them as it would have been to him.

The section foreman at Ogahalla was a married man, and his wife lived there with him, so the cooking was done on the communal principle, and as a result the men fared very much better. Peter had dinner with them, then, as MacTaggert was with the B. and B.—Bridge and Building—gang, some five miles farther on, he left his suitcase at the section house and walked along the track to meet him.

It was the beginning of February, but the day was unusually mild—and there were no mosquitoes or bush flies. The snow plough had passed recently,

and the snow was piled high on each side of the track in two gleaming white banks ; and beyond them showed an endless vista of snow-powdered trees, so clean against the dazzling cloudless blue of the sky. Crisp. Exhilarating. A day peculiarly Canadian.

After an hour's walk, with his cheeks glowing and his breath coming in little puffs, condensing in the cold air like a miniature steam-engine, Peter came upon MacTaggert suspended on a cradle below the girders of a bridge which the gang were scraping and painting. "I'm glad to see you," he said, shaking hands as soon as he could get up.

"I'm glad to see you, Mac."

It *was* good to be friends with MacTaggert again, to see his eyes twinkling in the old genial way. It appeared that he had had his vicissitudes even as Peter had. A Swede had been taken on at Wapiti in Peter's place, and two weeks later achieved the distinction of going mad and threatening to brain any one who went near him. Eventually they had overpowered him from behind, and taken him to Hearst bound hand and foot, and from there he was conveyed to the asylum. But this chance meeting with the roadmaster at Hearst had given MacTaggert an opportunity to better himself, for there happened to be a vacancy on the B. and B. gang ; and he applied for it, moving to Ogahalla, where conditions were much more sociable.

"I'm booming now," he said. "I get forty cents an hour. Now let's hear about you."

Peter gave a short account of events since he had left the section gang.

"So you were in the fire? We heard about it here . . . and what are you doing now?"

"I'm taking a month's holiday and then going back to the Vandervell. There would be a job there for you, Mac, I should think, if you care to go to Timbury."

"I'll think about it, thanks," said MacTaggart; "but when I've made a stake of three hundred dollars I'm going back to England. . . . Ah, well, I wish I was going to Winnipeg with you; I should like to see Snow again."

Snow was the first person Peter encountered when he arrived in Winnipeg two days later. He was sitting in the concourse of the station, wearing the same grey suit with the peg-top trousers; and a sample case by his side showed that he still represented the Gold Seal Hosiery Company.

He stared at Peter as if he were a ghost. "Well, I'll be gol-darned! If it isn't Cochrane. I thought you were gone for good. Where's Mac?"

"At Ogahalla.—How's business?"

"Fair," said Snow. "Fair. I sold one pair of silk an' wool to a dame in Portage Avenue yesterday."

"Have you had your show-down with Craile yet?"

Snow's eyes twinkled suspiciously behind their glasses.

"Say, what do you think my leg is—elastic?"

"Tell me about your sale," said Peter, and Snow needed no further invitation. It was like old times at the "Y." It was only a year ago since Peter himself had hawked a sample case round, but so much had happened in between that it seemed more like ten. He wondered who had his territory now, and asked Snow.

"Chap named Braun—another gol-darned Englishman. And say, the luck of that guy ! You know those patent colour charts we pay two cents for and hand out free to prospects ? They've got 'Price 25 cents' marked on them. Well, Braun bought three on credit and took them out on his territory.

"He was feeling like death that morning—hadn't a cent to his name. Nothing to eat, nothing to smoke, the rent to pay. Another day and he would have been in the river.

"At the first house he came to, he rang the bell and handed out a chart. The lady tore it up in his face. 'I've had enough of you salesmen,' she said. 'Ring, ring, ring all day.'

"That cost me a quarter, madam,' said Braun.

"The lady flung a quarter at him. 'Take it and go.'

"Braun grinned, and handed out another chart. 'Will you give me a quarter for this one too ?'

"That fetched her. Yes, sir ! That's the way to treat those hard-boiled dames. Stand up to 'em ! After a moment she grinned too, and invited him in. He sold her half a dozen pairs of black full-fashioned,

then she introduced him to all her friends, and he sold to them too. Now he's got a car."

Snow reverted to his own sale of silk and wool.
"But I ain't got the commission yet," he ended.

"That means lend me a quarter," thought Peter.
But he was right only in principle.

"Lend me five bucks," said Snow.

Peter handed them over. He felt Snow deserved it.

He inquired after Stenhouse, Young, and Loring. Stenhouse was in hospital, dying. Young was quite a prosperous salesman. Loring was in Toronto. He had got out a book of poems, crashed Toronto Society, and was becoming a recognized poet of distinction. "He's a great man now," said Snow ; "he sent me five bucks in his last letter. Well, come an' eat."

Peter, conscious of a full pocket, acquiesced. Snow should see the bounty of another great, though possibly not quite such a great man. Besides, he wanted to hear once more Snow's snarl : "R-r-raisin pie !"

He went to see Stenhouse in hospital. There was little he could do. He felt outrageously sturdy as he took Stenhouse's thin, emaciated hand. "Well, old boy," he was greeted, "it is nice of you to come and see me." Illness had washed away all Stenhouse's peculiarities and left only the pure metal. "I'm not afraid to die, old chap," he said as Peter left, and his face, transfigured with a smile of genuine radiant happiness, made Peter bite his lip to restrain emotion. They had travelled the same road. Now he was facing the sun : and Stenhouse was facing *his* sun.

Peter did not regret his experiences. They might have been unpleasant—some of them distinctly were—but they had enabled him to find his niche. He knew now that he would never be the great engineer his father had wished ; some quality he lacked, certainly not imagination or even driving force, but immediate grasp of practical detail. He could see visions. But he couldn't see all the framework leading up to them. Still, he was a step up the ladder. The family of Cochrane—engineers. When he and Aileen were returning from their honeymoon they had passed under the Quebec Bridge, that wonder of the world, the tremendous spans arching up to meet the sky : vast, aloof, magnificent. Peter's heart swelled. The man who had designed all that ! . . . How he would foster any talent in his son, if he should have one. There and then he planned it out : High School, McGill University. By then he would know his bent, whether Civil, Electrical, or Mechanical. And Peter would have the capital to start him on the road.

That night Peter had taken out the gold watch which had been his father's and Farmer John Cochrane's before him ; the watch which had seen so much striving, so many vicissitudes. He, Peter, would hand it on. Aileen saw him handling it. She went to him. "Peter, do you think . . . if you hadn't married me ? "

"No," he said, "I'm happy. It's you I want, Aileen."

And he knew he had achieved his destiny.

Sometimes the creative spirit had stirred again, not wholly satisfied by the work in the mine. He had tried to work out a new process for the extraction of gold. He had worked long and seriously, encouraged by the mine authorities, and introduced some improvements into the machinery. Then his son had been born, and he was wrapped up completely in him—him and Aileen. The family of Cochrane—engineers. Surely his son would be great.

“Peter !”

“Coming,” he called.

“Dinner’s ready.”

Peter knocked out his pipe and turned to go in. The sun was setting, red and gold, startlingly vivid, splendid even in their dying—a Canadian sunset. Henceforth Canada’s great star would be his.

THE END

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